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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



# THESIS

## INFORMAL NETWORKS AND SAUDI REGIME STABILITY

by

David H. McAllister

September, 1997

Thesis Advisor:

Glenn E. Robinson

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The increasingly vocal Islamist opposition to the Saudi regime, which gathered strength following the Gulf War, lent new urgency to predictions of the regime's demise. The fact that the Saud family has retained control of the government throughout this period of gloomy forecasting prompts the question — how has the Saudi regime managed to confound popular expectations and maintain power in the face of increasing Islamist opposition?

The central thesis of this study is that the Saudi government has prevented opposition groups from gaining significant popular following or developing power bases by eliminating or controlling informal networks within Saudi Arabia. This position differs from the most widely accepted explanations, which center around oil revenues resulting from the 1970's oil boom as the key factor in the longevity of the royal family. While undoubtedly an important tool used liberally by the Al Saud, this thesis argues oil revenues are secondary in importance and only part of a much larger and more significant effort in the regime's struggle against its opposition.

This study assesses whether Islamist opposition can seriously challenge the Saudi government by analyzing three case studies (concerning Pakistan and Egypt as well as Saudi Arabia) which consider how Islamist groups organize, what types of organizations are successful in challenging central authority, and how regimes respond to such challenges. Placing this information in context with the dominant roles tribe, class, and religion play in Saudi society provides a better foundation for assessing the future stability of the Saudi regime than traditional rentier theory.

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**INFORMAL NETWORKS AND SAUDI REGIME STABILITY**

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Lieutenant, United States Navy  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. ISLAMIST ORGANIZATION & INFORMAL NETWORK THEORY .....	5
III. THE USE OF INFORMAL NETWORKS IN SAUDI ARABIA, PAKISTAN, AND EGYPT .....	15
A. SAUDI ARABIA .....	17
1. Saudi Islamist Organization — Cause and Effect .....	17
2. Tribe and Islam — Tools for Stability .....	22
3. Saudi Control of Informal Networks .....	27
B. PAKISTAN .....	36
1. Jama'at-i Islami -- Organization & Challenges .....	38
2. Biraderi Politics and Islam — Tools for Cooption .....	51
3. Regime Control of Informal Networks .....	54
C. EGYPT .....	59
1. Muslim Brotherhood — Organization and Challenges .....	61
2. Family and Islam — Tools for Opposition .....	73
3. Regime Inability to Control Informal Networks .....	75
D. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SAUDI CASE .....	81
IV. IMPACT UPON SAUDI CIVIL SOCIETY .....	87

V. CONCLUSION .....	97
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	103
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	109

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The increasingly vocal Islamist opposition to the Saudi regime, which gathered strength following the Gulf War, lent new urgency to predictions of the regime's demise. The fact that the Saud family has retained control of the government throughout this period of gloomy forecasting prompts the question — how has the Saudi regime managed to confound popular expectations and maintain power in the face of increasing Islamist opposition?

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Through comparative analysis with Pakistan and Egypt, this study assesses whether Islamist opposition can seriously challenge the Saudi government. The comparison examines how Islamist groups organize, what types of organizations are successful in challenging central authority, and how regime responses to such challenges may vary. Placing this information in context with the dominant roles tribe, class, and religion play in Saudi society provides a better foundation for assessing the future stability of the Saudi regime than traditional rentier theory.

The Egyptian and Pakistani cases are illuminating in comparison. Although the

Jama'at i-Islami of Pakistan has been one of the most influential Islamist parties in the world, it has never achieved its goal of establishing an Islamic state with sharia as the basis for politics, economics and culture. This failure can be traced to three issues — the Jama'at's elitist ideology and organization, its participation in the political process, and most importantly, the regime's actions to control and coopt the informal networks which are so useful in fomenting opposition to an authoritarian regime.

In contrast, the government of Egypt has been unable to develop and implement policies which would control or coopt the informal networks and associations which the Muslim Brotherhood has exploited so successfully. This failure can be traced to the relative alienation of the ruling elite from the masses, a lack of financial and personnel resources, and most importantly the grass roots nature of the Brotherhood's *da'wa*, or call to God. The government finds itself unable to compete with the extensive social services provided by the Islamists, and is also unable to benefit from cooption of Islam to legitimize the state.

The general lessons to be learned from the Pakistani and Egyptian experiences are applicable to the Saudi case. Indeed, these lessons may be useful in determining the possible nature of Saudi civil society in the future. First, the Saudi regime cannot afford to lose touch with the masses, as the Egyptian regime has done to some degree and as the Jama'at was never in a position to do. Second, repression is not a tool which confers legitimacy upon a regime. Third, movement away from repression is recommended by the Pakistani experience. Protracted involvement with the political process creates barriers to the further progress of revivalism and immunizes the political process to its challenge. Finally, the Saudi regime cannot allow economic reform to be hijacked by the economic interests of the royal family, as Egyptian economic reform was hijacked by the

Egyptian elites. Instead, the Al Saud have the opportunity to use both governmental regulation and informal networks in a beneficial manner, to ensure that the needed liberalization of the Saudi economy is conducted fairly and efficiently.

Three factors point to the continued stability of Saudi Arabia. First, there has been no weakening of central authority in Saudi Arabia. Second, the government has not threatened the interests of substantial segments of the population. Although different elements of society have voiced dissatisfaction at times, there has been no widespread dissatisfaction which cuts across tribal, class or religious boundaries. Finally, the Saudi regime has been very adept at ensuring that religious, merchant and technocrat elites have maintained their bases of influence and stakes in the regime. This has prevented any serious efforts to utilize informal networks against the regime. The regime appears serious about balancing the power of the different interest groups and is slowly working to institutionalize the relationships which have been built over time.

The ability of the Al Saud to coopt informal networks — patron-client, religious, occupational and residential — has been responsible for the inability of Saudi Islamist organizations to successfully challenge central authority. So long as Saudi Arabia's culture continues to function along the lines of tribe, class and religion, it is likely that the Saudi royal family will remain in power.





## I. INTRODUCTION

“Shah Arabia; Will the House of Saud go the way of the Pahlavis?” asks the title of a September 1996 article.<sup>1</sup> Sensationalist headlines similar to this have periodically appeared since the Iranian revolution of 1979, contributing to the impression that the Al Saud regime has been in danger of overthrow. The increasingly vocal Islamist opposition to the Saudi regime, which gathered strength following the Gulf War, lent new urgency to predictions of demise. The fact that the Saud family has retained control of the government throughout this period of gloomy forecasting prompts the question — how has the Saudi regime managed to confound popular expectations and maintain power in the face of increasing Islamist opposition?

The central thesis of this study is that the Saudi government has prevented opposition groups from gaining significant popular following or developing power bases by eliminating or controlling informal networks within Saudi Arabia. This position differs from the most widely accepted explanations, which center around oil revenues resulting from the 1970's oil boom as the key factor in the longevity of the royal family. “In Saudi Arabia, money is the great social lubricator,” one unnamed western diplomat stated.<sup>2</sup> While undoubtedly an important tool used liberally by the Al Saud, oil revenues

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<sup>1</sup> David Aikman, “Shah Arabia; Will the House of Saud go the way of the Pahlavis?,” *The American Spectator*, September 1996.

<sup>2</sup> George D. Moffett III, “Saudis See Political Change - On Own Terms,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 31 October 1990, 1.

are secondary in importance and only part of a much larger and more significant effort in the Saudi regime's struggle against its opposition.

Assessments of Saudi regime stability which rely primarily on economic forecasts and the ability of the government to coopt the opposition with benefits can be flawed because they neglect two factors. To adequately assess the likelihood that Islamist opposition can seriously challenge the Saudi government, one must first consider how Islamist groups organize and what types of organizations are successful in challenging central authority. Additionally, one must examine the dominant roles tribe, class, and religion play in Saudi society and how they affect the ability of Saudi Islamist groups to organize. Taking these factors into account assists in explaining why the Al Saud have maintained power and provides a better foundation for assessing the future stability of the Saudi regime.

In Chapter II the general organization of Islamist groups and the significance of informal networks in Middle Eastern society are assessed. Chapter III contains three case studies — Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Egypt. Pakistan and Egypt have each experienced long-term Islamist challenges to the state. Analysis and comparison of these experiences reveal weaknesses and strengths inherent in different approaches to controlling Islamist opposition. These strengths and weaknesses are useful in evaluating the Saudi regime's strategies to control its opposition.

Specific Islamist organizations and significant challenges to the regime are discussed in each of these cases. To place regime responses to these challenges in perspective, the roles of tribe, class, and religion are examined and, finally, regime

responses to Islamist challenges are discussed in the context of control or elimination of informal networks.<sup>3</sup> Chapter III closes with a comparative assessment of what the Pakistani and Egyptian cases mean for the Saudi case. Chapter IV discusses Saudi civil society with regard to the comparative findings discussed in the preceding chapter and examines how informal networks might be used by the Al Saud to improve the Saudi economy and solidify regime stability. Concluding remarks are found in Chapter V.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be stressed here that this study focuses on how informal networks are controlled and coopted through coercion, ideology, and social ties and does not specifically address how these networks form or interact. A thorough treatment of the formation and interaction of these various networks would require extensive social and anthropological research *in situ* and is beyond the scope of this study.



## II. ISLAMIST ORGANIZATION & INFORMAL NETWORK THEORY

During the 1970's a new category of Islamist activists began to emerge throughout the Middle East. Rapidly growing populations, urbanization, and expanded educational opportunities led to the development of a new lower-middle class of intellectuals, a class marginalized by societies unable to provide jobs and status commensurate with educational achievement.<sup>4</sup> This group would emerge as the cadre for “neofundamentalist” Islamist movements which appeared so prominently in newspaper headlines during the 1980's and 1990's.<sup>5</sup>

The sociological make-up of these Islamist cadres can be generalized — they are primarily young intellectuals, educated in Westernized curricula, and in many cases from recently urbanized families. Recruitment for most Islamist groups is conducted primarily in “intellectual, urban milieus.”<sup>6</sup> Since Islamist unrest has typically been an urban phenomenon, the increasing urbanization of Middle Eastern countries creates an environment conducive to Islamist recruitment and potential destabilization.

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<sup>4</sup> Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 48-49.

<sup>5</sup> Olivier Roy refers to neofundamentalism as re-Islamization from below. Neofundamentalists preach an individual return to the practices of Islam with an emphasis on sharia (Islamic law). In this manner they resemble the traditional fundamentalist mullahs, but are distinguished from them by their “...intellectual origins, professional insertion in modern society, and involvement in politics.” O. Roy, 75.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 49-50. Also see John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press; rev. ed., 1995), 123.



In Saudi Arabia specifically, the last twenty years have seen rapid migration of the population to cities. In the early 1970's approximately 26 percent of the population lived in cities; by 1990 this had risen to 73 percent. The capital city, Riyadh, grew from 666,000 inhabitants in 1974 to an estimated 1.8 million in 1984.<sup>7</sup> As cities were growing in Saudi Arabia, educational opportunities for Saudi citizens were widely expanded.

At the beginning of the oil boom decade of the 1970's education expenditures per year were \$148 million; by mid-1980 they had reached \$6.4 billion per year. Student enrollments also experienced dramatic growth throughout all levels of education, with an increasing emphasis placed on higher education. The 1971 budget for higher education was \$18 million, approximately 12 percent of the total education budget, and by 1984 stood at \$3.7 billion, or 46 percent of the total education budget. This over-emphasis on higher education had two negative consequences — very few Saudis were able or inclined to accept employment in the mid-level technical or administrative segments of the workforce and the number being graduated at the higher education level could not be effectively absorbed by an economy critically short of workers in the technical skill areas.<sup>8</sup>

This pattern repeated itself throughout the Middle East, in Egypt, Algeria, Iran and the Gulf states. Rapidly expanded educational opportunities created a new category of educated individuals who found it difficult to secure positions which corresponded to

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<sup>7</sup> Helen Chapin Metz (ed.), *Saudi Arabia: a country study* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1993), 106-110.

<sup>8</sup> Delwin A. Roy, "Saudi Arabian Education: Development Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 3 (July 1992): 482.

their expectations.<sup>9</sup> These individuals turned to Islam as a means to achieve positions in society. But how did they organize themselves, recruit members into their organizations and attempt to foment social upheaval?

Guilain Denoeux chose to examine urban unrest in the Middle East from the perspective of informal networks. He uses the term network to “...refer to groups of individuals linked to one another by highly personal, non-contractual bonds and loyalties.”<sup>10</sup> Four specific types of networks are examined by Denoeux — clientelist (patron-client), occupational, religious, and residential — as he attempts to determine the causal link between rapid urbanization and instability.<sup>11</sup>

Many studies conducted on the phenomenon of rapid urbanization in the third world during the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's concluded that urbanization promoted participation in informal associations and voluntary organizations. Furthermore, these associations and organizations played a stabilizing role by diluting class consciousness among the poor, sheltering against anomie and alienation, and providing sources of aid and assistance through kin, neighbors, friends and powerful patrons.<sup>12</sup> Denoeux, however, perceived that these studies tended to neglect the potential for informal networks to play a destabilizing role. Many scholars were quick to point to rapid

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<sup>9</sup> O. Roy, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Guilain Denoeux, *Urban Unrest in the Middle East: A Comparative Study of Informal Networks in Egypt, Iran, and Lebanon* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 3, 17.



urbanization as a primary cause of instability in the Middle East and also one of the major forces behind the growth of Islamic “fundamentalism.”<sup>13</sup>

Historically, informal networks in the Middle East played a significant role in society due to the nature of Islamic social thought, which was opposed to the formation of organized institutions which might present challenges to the all-inclusive solidarity of the umma.<sup>14</sup> In the absence of formal political organizations, informal networks therefore played a key role in mediating between the individual and an impersonal urban social environment.<sup>15</sup>

Informal networks worked at two levels. The first centered on informal ties extending from family members of the governing elite down to commoners, through key notables such as ulama (religious scholars) and wealthy merchants. The second consisted of various voluntary associations, independent of direct participation by members of the governing elites, based on quarter (neighborhood), religious, or occupational affiliations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Hourani, “The Islamic City in the Light of Recent Research,” *The Islamic City* (1970), 14, as cited in Denoeux, 31. Umma refers to the entire Islamic community.

<sup>15</sup> Marshall G.S. Hodson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Vol. 2, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1974), 106, as cited in Denoeux, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Denoeux, 34.

Patron-client networks generally provided stability by acting as a “hierarchical integrator” between society’s leaders and the poorer masses.<sup>17</sup> These networks lent stability to the Mamluk dynasty in Egypt, the Ottoman empire, and Iran under the Safavid and Qajar dynasties. Such networks of patronage were able to control the populations of major cities through the distribution of gifts, pensions, jobs and salaries, as well as through contracts and access to and protection from government.<sup>18</sup>

Religious ties and networks also served to stabilize the urban masses through “...charitable, educational, administrative, legal, and economic functions that we would now associate with the government.”<sup>19</sup> Professional networks developed from kinship and reciprocal economic ties and obligations, fostering a sense of community among artisans and shopkeepers. Influential members of these networks would often be delegated authority to implement government directives dealing with trading and manufacturing professions.<sup>20</sup> Neighborhood solidarities and networks naturally developed in the residential quarters of Middle Eastern cities, which were often populated by people with the same ethnic and religious background and who were often from the same village. The central authorities would delegate responsibility to informal leaders of such quarters, known by titles such as shaykh, ra’is, sharif, muqaddam or, in Iran, kadkhuda. These individuals and their assistants would act as extensions of the

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<sup>17</sup> The term “hierarchical integrator” was suggested to me by Dr. Robinson.

<sup>18</sup> Denoeux, 38-39.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

government, sometimes collecting taxes, implementing directives and settling disputes within their quarter.<sup>21</sup>

However, informal networks such as these were not always used to promote stability. The same ties which could be used to support governments could also be used to protest against government policies deemed threatening to the interests of the lower and middle classes. Denoeux hypothesizes that urbanization has caused social dislocation and psychological and social strains which could be exploited to form informal groups aimed at reintegrating dislocated individuals and marginalized populations. However, these informal groups can be tied to counterelites not controlled by the authorities and can be based on alternative visions of society. Therefore, they present a direct or potential challenge to the sociopolitical order.<sup>22</sup>

Patron-client networks could be used by counterelites dissatisfied with the central authority. Denoeux points to three situations especially conducive to notables acting as leaders of popular upheaval: when central authority is weakened, when government threatens the interests of substantial segments of the population, or when notables feel their interests and positions of power are threatened by government decisions or alternate sources of patronage.<sup>23</sup>

Religious networks have the greatest potential for promoting instability because they are typically built around Islamic places, institutions, and personnel. These

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

elements offer activists the organizational resources, the following, and the safe havens which are essential to collective action. Though varying in degrees of freedom in many Middle Eastern states, the mosque may offer the only safe haven for voicing popular discontent. Due to the latitude provided mosques, the Friday prayer has proven to be a powerful tool for those wishing to incite protest against the government. Religious brotherhoods, such as the Sufi orders and the Muslim Brotherhood, have also offered potential for destabilization because of their financial independence from the state, secretive nature, and tremendous popular appeal.<sup>24</sup>

Neighborhood solidarities and networks could also be destabilizing. Youth associations, which provided young men with an outlet for their energies and contributed to the protection and physical security of neighborhoods, could easily be turned against outsiders, including the government. Acting as popular militias, they at times protected the population against government abuses, kept the government at bay to preserve autonomy, and acted as an extralegal political opposition.<sup>25</sup>

Occupational networks, often centered around the bazaar, could act in concert to oppose unpopular taxes or even to pass political information. The Constitutional Revolution in Iran is one example of social upheaval made possible by the use of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 47. Also see Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 109-121.

<sup>25</sup> Denoeux, 45-46.

informal networks. In this case, the guilds of merchantmen from the bazaar “...provided financial support, organizational resources and the rank and file of the demonstrations.”<sup>26</sup>

During the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Islamists made extensive use of informal networks. Patron-client networks played an important part in the radicalization of the revolution, as lesser clerics used their ties to the new elite to displace older and more established clerical leaders. The rapid ascent of Friday prayer leaders appointed by Khomeini in all of Iran’s main cities was instrumental in securing victory for the Islamic Republic Party against the moderate clergy and other opposition.<sup>27</sup>

Iranian “bazaaris”, a term referring to craftsmen, merchants, shopkeepers and moneylenders, mobilized against the Pahlavi dynasty during the mid-to late 1970's because they felt threatened by state policies and cultural trends in Iranian society. Due to frequent meetings held by the bazaaris, the large number of people who belonged to the networks, and cross-network contacts, the bazaaris were able to organize demonstrations, hold coordinated shutdowns in support of the Islamists, and counter hooligans and thugs hired by SAVAK (the Iranian intelligence service) and the police to burn shops, stores and homes of merchants. More importantly, the members of the occupational networks often were connected to the Islamists through religious networks (belonging to the same houses of worship) and other informal networks in the

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<sup>26</sup> Ervand Abruhamian, “ The Crowd in Iranian Politics 1905-1953,” 41, *Past and Present* (1968), as cited in Denoeux, 49.

<sup>27</sup> Denoeux, 131.



neighborhoods (tea houses and restaurants).<sup>28</sup> Using these affiliations with informal networks, Khomeini and other Islamists were able to mobilize the masses against the Shah.

The Iranian revolution is one historical example of the use of informal networks and serves to highlight the general principle that informal networks have a dual role — they can be used to stabilize or destabilize. Informal network theory shows that different types of networks can be used for either purpose. Determining where these networks exist and who controls them is essential in assessing the potential for destabilization in urban societies. Furthermore, the significance of informal networks has long been understood by Islamist movements, and Islamist manipulation of these networks predates their use in the Iranian Revolution. The case studies which follow expand upon this point and show the benefits and dangers which may result from manipulation of informal networks.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 139-148.





### III. THE USE OF INFORMAL NETWORKS IN SAUDI ARABIA, PAKISTAN, AND EGYPT

Several factors justify selecting Pakistan and Egypt as case studies to juxtapose with Saudi Arabia. First, population growth and urbanization trends in Pakistan and Egypt have been similar to those found in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the population of Pakistan increased 250 percent from 1947 to 1981, with urban population growth a booming 400 percent.<sup>29</sup> In Egypt during the same time period, the population increased approximately 220 percent, with the urban population in Cairo increasing 400 percent.<sup>30</sup>

Second, as in Saudi Arabia, rapidly expanded educational opportunities created a new category of educated individuals in both Egypt and Pakistan. These individuals found it difficult to secure positions which corresponded to their expectations and they also turned to Islam as a means to achieve status in society.<sup>31</sup> Finally, and most importantly, the Pakistani and Egyptian cases have internal similarities and differences which prove useful when evaluating the Saudi case.

Pakistan and Egypt are respectively home to long-lived, politically important Islamist organizations — the Jama'at i-Islami and Muslim Brotherhood. Although similar in that each organization was founded with a clear sense of mission, both have

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<sup>29</sup> Farhat Haq, "The Rise of the MQM in Pakistan: Politics of Ethnic Mobilization," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 11 (November 1995): 994.

<sup>30</sup> Helen Chapin Metz (ed.), *Egypt: a country study*, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1991), 104-105.

<sup>31</sup> O. Roy, 93.

utilized informal networks to challenge the ruling elite, and both have experienced government repression and coercion, they now enjoy different circumstances. The Jama'at i-Islami of Pakistan has virtually ceased to be a political force while the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt remains a serious and meaningful political threat to the Egyptian government. The difference lies in the manner in which the respective regimes met the Islamist opposition and how effective they were in controlling or coopting informal networks. Where the Pakistani state effectively controlled the use of informal networks by the Jama'at, the Egyptian government was unable to prevent the Brotherhood from using informal networks as a source of political and social power. The willingness of the Pakistani regime to allow the Jama'at to participate in the political process also differs from the Egyptian policy of banning the Brotherhood from legal participation in politics. These points are key in explaining the different results.

The Saudi case, in contrast to both the Pakistani and Egyptian cases, provides little detail about how the regime specifically controls informal networks. Most of the information provided here is anecdotal in nature, and assessments of Saudi informal networks are based on inference and comparison. Informal network theory and the history of Islamist use of these networks, as shown by the Pakistani and Egyptian cases, make this inference possible. While treatment of this topic would be improved by an in-depth social-anthropological look at Saudi informal networks, enough evidence exists to make this a worthwhile endeavor. This chapter will address each of the three case studies in turn, and close with a discussion of the implications for the Saudi case.

## A. SAUDI ARABIA

### 1. Saudi Islamist Organization — Cause and Effect

At the time of the Iranian Revolution Saudi Arabia experienced Islamist protests which shook the government. On November 20, 1979, Juhaiman al Utaiba, a Sunni from one of the foremost families of the Najd region, led a force of 500 dissidents into the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Juhaiman justified the seizure of the Grand Mosque by claiming "...the Al Saud had lost its legitimacy through corruption, ostentation, and mindless imitation of the West...."<sup>32</sup> Many of the dissidents were from two Najdi tribes that have traditionally provided recruits for the Saudi national guard, an important element in the internal Saudi balance of power. Furthermore, "a score of the dissidents were unemployed graduates of the kingdom's seminary in Medina."<sup>33</sup>

Shia riots broke out in the Eastern Province two weeks after the siege of the Grand Mosque. The two towns where riots occurred were relatively underdeveloped, with inadequate electrification and water supplies and too few schools, hospitals, roads and sewers.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, there were widespread manifestations of religious resurgence, particularly among youth, university students, and faculty. Once again in the Middle East marginalized elements of society banded together to voice dissatisfaction with their lot in

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<sup>32</sup> Metz, 39-40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 40. Although some of Juhaiman's followers were well-educated, the majority were lower-class and poorly educated. See R. Hrair Dekmejian, "The Rise of Political Islamism in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 4 (autumn 1994): 629.

<sup>34</sup> Metz, 41.

life. In both instances, the Saudi regime ruthlessly repressed the acts of violence and the opposition was short-lived.

The events, however, did create a surge of speculation about the stability of the Saudi regime due to flat economic conditions and the seemingly unstoppable tide of Islamic activism, exemplified by the Islamist victory in Iran. News reports of the early 1980's spoke of a shaken Saudi Arabia that remained vulnerable to Islamist activity, contended that the regime would have to ensure religious leaders were given a voice, and indicated that many observers feared the regime was only a step ahead of trouble.<sup>35</sup> These concerns were primarily based on economic analyses and the assessed ability of the Saudi regime to provide an increasing standard of living to its growing populace — in other words, could the Saudi regime continue to buy the consent of the governed?

This conception of political stability resulted from the oil boom of the 1970's and the vast newfound wealth it gave Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia became a “rentier” state, a state in which the government relies on the transfers from the international economy for the majority of its revenues. Oil revenues allowed the Saudi government, directed by the Al Saud tribe, to become dominant economic players even in nominally private sectors. Sectors like construction and retail depended on government spending, access to capital controlled by the government, and licenses issued by the government. The Al Saud obtained the ability to vest private interests in regime stability, giving advantages to allies and punishing those who opposed them. Furthermore, the government could provide

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<sup>35</sup> John Yemma, “Saudi Arabia: Stable, but has an Achilles’ Heel,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 13 March 1981, 4.



services directly to the citizenry, such as free education and health care, and subsidized housing, consumer goods and services. All the new economic tools were used to build political loyalty.<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, the largesse of the welfare state contributed to the rise of internal opposition. State support of religious and educational institutions and the latitude to allow them to operate publicly contributed to the rise of political opposition in Saudi Arabia.<sup>37</sup> As oil rents declined from over \$110 billion per year in the 1973-1982 period to about \$22.68 billion per year in 1986, the Saudi state found it difficult to provide the same level of benefits to its citizenry.<sup>38</sup> By the early 1990's, graduates from institutes of higher education faced the unfamiliar prospect of unemployment, which only emphasized the disparity between what Saudi nationals thought their education was preparing them for and what they were in fact receiving.<sup>39</sup>

The Gulf War in 1990-1991 was a catalyst for renewed Islamist activity in Saudi Arabia. The new Islamists "...consisted of tens of thousands of young, middle-class urbanites led by preachers, teachers, and students, mostly from religious universities.

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<sup>36</sup> F. Gregory Gause, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 43.

<sup>37</sup> F. Gregory Gause III, "The Gulf Conundrum: Economic Change, Population Growth, and Political Stability in the GCC States," *The Washington Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (winter 1997): 145.

<sup>38</sup> *Middle East Markets* 14 (January 1987), as cited in Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, "The price of wealth: business and state in labor remittance and oil economies," *International Organization* 43, no. 1 (winter 1989): 137.

<sup>39</sup> D. Roy, 503.

These Islamists were outspoken, sophisticated, better organized, and more numerous than the Ikwhan militants of the 1970's."<sup>40</sup> These Islamists were also given mass support by a "...class of recently urbanized bedouins, whose status of relative deprivation among more affluent urbanites made them eager converts to the activist cause."<sup>41</sup>

The "insulting" need for U.S. troops to defend the kingdom, perceived mismanagement of the economy, corruption of the royal family, economic and social inequity coupled with increasing urbanization, and the impact of modernization and encroaching Western cultural influences contributed to a growing Islamist undercurrent which erupted following the war.<sup>42</sup> The first public manifestation of Islamist activity occurred when a brief petition, also known as the "Letter of Demands," was addressed to King Fahd. The May 1991 petition was signed by more than 400 scholars and religious activists, including a number of senior ulama, and called for reform in several areas, as well as more stringent application of sharia.<sup>43</sup>

The next act from the Islamist opposition was the issuance of a 46-page "Memorandum of Advice," signed by over 100 activists, which was unprecedented in the

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<sup>40</sup> Dekmejian, 629. Juhaiman and his followers called themselves *Al Ikwhan*, or The Brotherhood. The original Ikwhan was the brotherhood of desert warriors founded by Abd al Aziz, the founder of the modern Saudi state. Juhaiman's grandfather rode in the Ikwhan with Abd al Aziz. See Metz, 21, 326.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 629-630.

<sup>43</sup> Gause, "The Gulf Conundrum...", 144. The issuance of the petition was preceded by a lengthy process of Islamist awakening where support for the challenge to the regime was gathered through sermons in religious universities and mosques. See "The Opposition," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (1 December 1996): 14.

bluntness of its tone and the specificity of its criticisms and suggestions. This memorandum accused the government of a “lack of seriousness” in abiding by sharia and asserted that the ulama were being marginalized in the policy-making process. It also demanded the establishment of a religious court with authority over the government in matters of sharia.<sup>44</sup>

The third major action by the new Islamists was the May 1993 formation by six activists of the “Committee to Defend Legitimate Rights (Sharia),” or CDLR. The CDLR founders called upon Saudi citizens to contact them with complaints about injustices, and these actions resulted in a severe crackdown against the Islamists by the Saudi regime.<sup>45</sup> Islamist activity did not disappear, however, and two bombings in the kingdom are believed to have been conducted by increasingly militant Saudi Islamists.

The resurgence in Islamist activity in the 1990's has resulted in another wave of alarmist reports in the press which question the stability of the Saudi regime. In “The Threat From Within — Saudi Monarch Should Sleep with One Eye Open,” Peter Theroux writes, “The generation of young technocrats that grew up rich and was educated in the United States, once thought to be on the brink of running the country, have stayed on the brink while corrupt royals have continued to rule — and loot — the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



country.”<sup>46</sup> The implication that finances could catch up with the Saudis is echoed in a backhanded manner by Christopher Lockwood, writing for the *Electronic Telegraph*:

“The comparison with Iran just doesn’t work,” one senior diplomat said. “This is a far richer country than Iran ever was, and life is still basically pretty good for most Saudis. People look around the region, especially since the war, and see much worse governments than this one. The royal family has the track record of always doing just enough to keep things under control.”<sup>47</sup>

These assessments of Saudi stability neglect the complexity of the Saudi response to the Islamist challenge. To fully understand and evaluate regime responses to Islamist pressures, and to subsequently assess the future stability of the regime and the viability of Islamist movements, it is necessary to consider the dominant roles tribe, class, and religion play in Saudi society.

## **2. Tribe and Islam — Tools for Stability**

The modern Saudi state was founded by Abd al Aziz bin Saud, the great-great-great-grandson of Mohhamed ibn Saud.<sup>48</sup> Abd al Aziz, in conjunction with his Wahhabi army, the Ikwhan, waged a campaign in 1902-1924 to unify the regions that now constitute Saudi Arabia. Upon seizing Riyadh in 1902, Abd al Aziz obtained the support of the religious establishment and established himself as the leader of the Al Saud and as

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<sup>46</sup> Peter Theroux, “The Threat From Within — Saudi Monarch Should Sleep with One Eye Open,” *Jinn* [www.pacificnews.org] (12 December 1995).

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Lockwood, “Bombers fail to undermine the House of Saud,” *Electronic Telegraph* 502 [www.telegraph.co.uk] (7 October 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Peter W. Wilson and Douglas F. Graham, *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 39.

the Wahhabi imam. From the beginning, the legitimacy of the Al Saud as rulers of Saudi Arabia was closely entwined with Islam. Upon capturing the Hijaz in 1924, Abd al Aziz became Khadim al Haramayn al-Sharifayn (custodian of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina).<sup>49</sup>

This responsibility gave Abd al Aziz a broader perspective on Islam, eventually causing him to oppose the Ikwhan due to their enthusiasm for pressing their form of Unitarian Islam upon non-Wahhabi Muslims — often at the point of the sword. To maintain the integrity of post-World War I borders set up by the British, Abd al Aziz was forced to take on the Ikwhan militarily. To do so, he went out to the countryside, building support and talking not only to those who would be fighting with him, but also to religious authorities, seeking their advice and approval. From this point on, a tradition of consultation with and subordination of the ulama was maintained by the Saudi regime.<sup>50</sup>

The Saudis have also continued the tradition established by Abd al Aziz of maintaining close ties with and subordinating other tribes in Saudi Arabia. A central element of legitimacy in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf monarchies is the concept of the ruler as paramount shaykh. Rulers maintain close relations with the tribal leaders in the tribal tradition of the majlis (council),<sup>51</sup> and “...despite the physical modernization which

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<sup>49</sup> Metz, 20-24.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>51</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies...*, 25. Direct access to rulers is available at regularly scheduled majlis, where petitions are received and complaints are heard. See Sandra Mackey, “A One-man Mideast — Except for Saudis,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (28

has taken place in the country, the relationship between the rulers and the ruled has remained the same. ...Members of the royal family are first and foremost politicians and only secondarily monarchists. A former American ambassador to Saudi Arabia, John West, likens them to politicians out on the hustings the week before the election.”<sup>52</sup>

The population is divided by tribal and class structures, as well as regional interests. “Each Saudi perceives himself as wearing three hats — class, tribe, and region.”<sup>53</sup> The Al Saud played upon these allegiances by orchestrating marriages to foster dependency and marginalization, as well as breaking the internal cohesion of the tribes.<sup>54</sup> The Saudi National Guard, a force headed by Crown Prince Abdallah and independent of the regular army, has units explicitly organized along tribal lines, and a study conducted in 1968-1970 showed that 80 percent of all Bedouin had at least one family member in the National Guard whose salary was essential to family support.<sup>55</sup>

Tribal cooption policies extend to the state bureaucracy as well. Persons from Hijaz, the region with commercial dominance prior to the oil wealth of the 1970's, enjoyed powerful positions in the government administration until King Faisal was assassinated. As members of the royal family accrued wealth for themselves and the

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October 1981), 23.

<sup>52</sup> Sandra Mackey, “A One-man Mideast — Except for Saudis,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (28 October 1981), 23.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed and Loulouwa Al-Rasheed, “Saudi Policy towards Tribal and Religious Opposition,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 1 (January 1996): 105.

<sup>55</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies...*, 27 and Wilson and Graham, 30.

state from oil revenues during the boom years, they embarked on a deliberate policy to recruit administrative personnel from Najdi tribes. The Najd region is the home of the Al Saud and the base of the tribe's support. The Najdi government administrators used their position to favor other Najdi and Najdi businesses, resulting in the creation of powerful administrative and commercial classes supplanting the older elite groups based outside Najd.<sup>56</sup>

Tribal values modified state administration, making it an important instrument for spreading the authority of the Al Saud. Consolidation progressed under each successive king, with King Faisal increasing central control by making local officials responsible directly to the king and also by creating a Ministry of Justice to regulate the autonomous religious courts.<sup>57</sup> Consolidation of power and influence also took place through other branches of the state bureaucracy:

Oil rents were transmitted directly to the centralized organs of the Saudi state, which then distributed them through contracts, gifts, interest-free loans, and subsidies. During the oil boom years, these distributive policies created a new private sector which mirrored the tribal and regional composition of the bureaucracy, linking business and government through kinship networks, tribal loyalties, and business partnerships.<sup>58</sup>

The ultimate patron-client network was established, with the Al Saud centered as the patron for all major actors in the Saudi political environment.

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<sup>56</sup> Metz, 64.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>58</sup> Chaudhry, "The price of wealth: business and state in labor remittance and oil economies," 103.



In the same manner, the state concentrated on consolidating influence and coopting religious elements within Saudi society. Since the defeat of the Ikwhan, the ulama have remained subordinate to the Al Saud, yet have been closely consulted and relied upon to legitimate rule by the Al Saud. With the growth of a state apparatus in the 1960's, the ulama became marginalized in the political arena while maintaining their state-sanctioned role in the social arena.<sup>59</sup> The ulama were given a role in the system and in fact became state employees. "For the Saudi government, the trade-off is clear: power in certain areas in exchange for political loyalty and support."<sup>60</sup>

The area where the ulama have held most sway is social mores. The volunteer religious police, or "mutawwa'in," are part of the Organization to Prevent Vice and to Promote Virtue, a government body which enforces the strict interpretation of social mores officially sanctioned in Saudi Arabia.<sup>61</sup> The mutawwa'in are particularly prominent in urban areas, making sure commercial establishments are closed during prayer times, enforcing restrictions against the production and consumption of alcohol, monitoring female dress to ensure it adheres to accepted standards, and guarding against male-female interactions in public places.<sup>62</sup>

The regime's influence has even been enhanced in the residential area. District chieftains, or "umdahs," act as intermediaries between the citizens of the district and

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<sup>59</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies...*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

government offices. The umdahs also work with the police in order to maintain order and security in the neighborhood.<sup>63</sup> Not only do umdahs keep the peace, they also provide social benefits, such as welfare society loans for weddings.<sup>64</sup> With a comprehensive appreciation for the breadth and depth of regime influence established, it is now time to examine regime responses to the Islamist challenges of the last two decades.

### **3. Saudi Control of Informal Networks**

Following the seizure of the Grand Mosque, the royal family and ulama united in confronting Juhaiman and his followers. The ulama issued a fatwa (religious legal interpretation) against the rebels, and the government removed the militants by force. In this time of crisis, where the power and legitimacy of both the regime and ulama were challenged, both were able to work together to safeguard their interests. The Al Saud then concentrated on strengthening tribal ties by increasing financial distributions to tribal leaders and increasing the number of appearances at various ceremonial functions by members of the royal family, including King Khalid and Crown

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<sup>63</sup> "Role of distric umdahs lauded," *Moneyclips*, (26 March 1994).

<sup>64</sup> "WSAY granted loans to 3.600 youths since 1990," *Moneyclips* (4 August 1996).



Prince Fahd. Additionally, more than 60 of the dissidents were beheaded in public squares throughout the kingdom.<sup>65</sup>

The incident resulted in the Saudi leadership reaffirming their religious credentials by imposing stricter enforcement of religious laws. The regime also promised that a Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) would be formed as part of an effort to provide greater input to government.<sup>66</sup> Although the establishment of the majlis was not carried out until much later, it was an indication that the regime took the unrest seriously.

The Shia riots of 1979 were successfully repressed by the military, and the regime began spending more money on infrastructure in the two towns where unrest occurred. More importantly, the government sharply increased police surveillance and persecution of Shia activists. Coupled with brute force, the Saudi regime has also systematically worked to prevent the formation of informal Shia networks. Royal decrees forbid the building of mosques, funeral homes or community halls by Shia. Existing Shia mosques and funeral homes have been closed on occasion, Shia books and audio cassettes are banned, and Shia are not allowed to hold any government positions.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, Shia

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<sup>65</sup> "Enforcement of Strict Islamic Law Tightens," *Middle East Executive Reports* 3, no. 3 (March 1980): 8.

<sup>66</sup> "The Opposition," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (1 December 1996): 14.

<sup>67</sup> Mamoun Fandy, "From Confrontation to Creative Resistance: The Shia's Oppositional Discourse in Saudi Arabia," *Critique* (Fall 1996): 4-5.

are denied positions of leadership in most jobs, including the oil industry, the Saudi National Guard and the army.<sup>68</sup>

After primarily using the stick for a number of years against the Shia, the regime eventually brought out the carrot in the 1990's, with King Fahd even appointing a Shia to the Majlis al-Shura in 1993. As a result of these efforts, Shia dissidents have gradually moderated their approach to opposing the regime.<sup>69</sup> "Previous critics of the government have often been brought into the tent by concessions or jobs, and some foreign newsletters critical of the kingdom have reportedly ceased publication after the Saudis made them offers they couldn't refuse."<sup>70</sup> However successful the Al Saud were in dealing with the Shia, their political flexibility and ability to manipulate informal networks would face the greatest challenge in responding to the Islamist opponents who gave voice to dissatisfaction after the Gulf War.

The May 1991 "Letter of Demands" was remarkable for two reasons — it was the first such petition of demands ever publicly presented to the King and it was accompanied by two letters of support, one from Shaykh ibn Athemen, a senior ulama, and the other from the Wahhabi Grand Mufti, Shaykh Abdul Aziz ibn Baz. This Islamist petition was also in direct response to a December 1990 petition to the king signed by 43 Saudis identified as liberal or secularist. In this petition, the secularists asked the king to

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<sup>68</sup> Jacob Goldberg, "The Shi'i Minority in Saudi Arabia," in Cole and Keddie (eds.), *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, 237.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Rasheed and Al-Rasheed, 109-113.

<sup>70</sup> Michael Collins Dunn, "Is The Sky Falling? Saudi Arabia's Economic Problems and Political Stability," *Middle East Policy* 3, no. 4 (April 1995): 38.

“...issue a codification of Islamic law that would provide for basic human rights, equality before the law regardless of race, tribe, gender, or social status, rights for Saudi women, a Consultative Council, and an independent judiciary.”<sup>71</sup>

The conservative religious establishment, along with an increasingly radical neofundamentalist element, felt in danger of becoming further marginalized in the kingdom's power structure. The royal family was stuck in the middle of a tug of war between modernists and religious conservatives. The first government reaction was to pressure the religious establishment to disown the more radical element and its attacks against the regime. Shakyh Abdul Aziz ibn Baz responded for the regime with a September 1991 criticism of the Islamists and their “whispering campaigns.” Additionally, the senior ulama of the Supreme Authority of Scholarly Research, Judicial Review, Propagation, and Guidance, led by Ibn Baz, condemned the “Letter of Demands” as disrespectful of the king. This letter marked the point of divergence between the official religious establishment and the younger Islamist activists.<sup>72</sup>

In response to criticisms and demands for reform and participation, King Fahd announced three royal decrees on 1 March 1992, establishing a constitution-like “Basic System of Government,” the statute for a new Majlis al-Shura, and a new system of regional government for the kingdom's 13 provinces.<sup>73</sup> These announcements, however,

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<sup>71</sup> Judith Caeser, “Liberals and Conservatives Press Riyadh,” *The New York Times*, 5 July 1991, as cited in Dekmejian, 632.

<sup>72</sup> Dekmejian, 633.

<sup>73</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies...*, 106.

did not satisfy the Islamists. In September 1992 the Islamists issued a “Memorandum of Advice” to Shaykh Ibn Baz criticizing the government’s domestic and foreign policies. The memorandum contained elaboration on the “Letter of Demands,” as well as a new set of even more radical demands. These included the appointment of ulama to oversee and participate in the work of all government agencies, ministries, and embassies to assure adherence to Islam, restriction of police powers, and removal of all restrictions on Islamic clerics, scholars and teachers to write, publish and preach. The regime could not let this challenge go unanswered and the senior ulama drafted a denunciation of the memorandum. However, seven of the seventeen senior ulama declined to sign the denunciation, giving the Islamists a partial victory. King Fahd dismissed the seven dissenting senior ulama in December, 1992, replacing them with ten pro-government ulama.<sup>74</sup>

Dekmejian concludes that the Islamists’ real intent was to form a policy-making council independent of the king and that, aside from concern regarding Western cultural penetration, some Islamists fear socioeconomic modernization because their religious training leaves them ill-prepared to succeed in a modernizing environment. Furthermore, “[t]he Islamist quest for power is also motivated by their urban middle-class status and the desire for upward mobility.”<sup>75</sup> As Olivier Roy states, “...the appearance of political Islamism often masks a recomposition of asabiyya, solidarity groups...”<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless,

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<sup>74</sup> Dekmejian, 633.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 637.

<sup>76</sup> O. Roy, 200.



as Saudi regime moves show, any effort by the Islamists to realign solidarity groups (informal networks) in their favor will fail because of regime cooption and control of those networks.

As Dekmejian points out, the regional and occupational composition of the Islamists who signed both the Letter of Demand and Memorandum of Advice should be worrisome for the Al Saud. A majority of the signers were from the Najd region with a large percentage being men of religion. The region and occupational group are both key elements in Saudi legitimacy. However, these men were not a representative cross-section of Saudi society, nor were they representative of the power base of the Al Saud; these men came mostly from non-tribal, urban middle-class backgrounds.

The regime would take the opportunity the Islamist opposition had provided to strengthen its control of patron-client and religious networks. With implementation of the Basic Law of Government, what was always implicit in Saudi politics became explicit — the role of the Al Saud in government, its central role in affairs of state, and the principle of hereditary succession were codified.<sup>77</sup> Through the establishment of the Majlis al-Shura and the appointment of sixty members to it, the regime solidified its grip on Saudi Arabia's ever-important patron-client network. The members appointed represented a cross-section of the Saudi elite, including regime constituencies like the

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<sup>77</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, "God, The King and The Nation: Political Rhetoric in Saudi Arabia in the 1990's," *Middle East Journal* 50, no. 3 (summer 1996): 364.

religious establishment, technocrats, and merchants.<sup>78</sup> No royal family members were appointed to the Council, but their influence was to be felt in the third royal decree.

The Law of the Provinces defined the structure of government for the 13 regions, set out the rights and responsibilities of the provincial governors, and created local councils of officials and citizens in each province to monitor development and advise the government. Each region was further divided into two governorates and centers, with the governors and vice-governors appointed by the prime minister (the king) and responsible to the Interior Minister. The original 13 governors and 26 vice-governors appointed in 1993 were all members of the royal family.<sup>79</sup>

While the Majlis al-Shura was populated primarily with technocrats, seats on the local councils were given mainly to tribal notables and members of prominent merchant families.<sup>80</sup> By distributing positions of influence between the two interest groups, the regime solidified its position with regard to each group while enabling conservative and modernist pressures to balance each other. Just as the Al Saud strengthened patron-client networks, they also solidified control of religious networks.

To counter the Islamic challenge and consolidate control over the religious apparatus, King Fahd appointed Shaykh Aziz ibn Baz as Grand Mufti, a state position vacant since 1970, and created a new Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Call, and

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<sup>78</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies...*, 109.

<sup>79</sup> Edmund O'Sullivan, "Saudi Arabia: Provincial System Announced," *Middle East Economic Digest* (27 September 1993).

<sup>80</sup> "Saudi Arabia: Political Background," *The Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profiles* (20 December 1996).



Guidance.<sup>81</sup> Shaykh Ibn Baz went from critic of the regime to part of it as a result of Saudi efforts to coopt the religious network of Saudi Arabia.<sup>82</sup> In October 1994 King Fahd appointed two new committees, staffed by senior members of the ruling family, the government and the ulama, to oversee Islamic activities in the kingdom.<sup>83</sup> “At the mosques, sermons and preachers are vetted in advance.”<sup>84</sup>

In addition to cooption tactics, the regime continued to suppress dissent actively when needed. The May 1993 formation of the CDLR and its subsequent attacks on the regime were met with arrests and retributions. The founders of the organization, all religious scholars and clerics working for the state apparatus, were fired from their jobs and jailed. Two of the members, Mohammed al-Masari and Saad al-Faqih, were subsequently released and made their way to London, where they reconstituted the organization. They proceeded to bombard the kingdom with fax reports detailing Saudi corruption, misrule, and hypocrisy. The regime responded to criticism by rounding up over a hundred prominent dissidents who had been critical of the government.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, the government has appeased religious conservatives by allowing the power

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<sup>81</sup> Metz, xxvi.

<sup>82</sup> As a result of his radical teachings, Shaykh Ibn Baz is considered to be partially responsible for the 1979 Grand Mosque seizure. Juhaiman was a student of Ibn Baz at the Al-Medina college of Theology and Ibn Baz, it is asserted, had some influence over Juhaiman. See Michel G. Nehme, “Saudi Arabia, 1950-1980: Between Nationalism and Religion,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 4 (October 1994): 939.

<sup>83</sup> Gause, “The Gulf Conundrum...,” 147.

<sup>84</sup> Lockwood.

<sup>85</sup> Aikman.

of the mutawwa'in to wax when social unrest against Western culture appears. Some argue that the regime has allowed mutawwa'in excesses to go unchecked in hopes of gathering the support of modernizers in reducing the power of the religious conservatives.<sup>86</sup> It is a balancing act the Saudis have become adept at performing.

Widespread support for the CDLR and other regime critics in the kingdom never materialized and regime tactics to counter the CDLR in particular appear to have been successful. Mohammed al-Masari declared bankruptcy after Saad al-Fiqh reportedly broke off from al-Masari (with the majority of CDLR operating funds) to set up a rival organization called the Islamic Reform Movement.<sup>87</sup> Saudi policies worked to marginalize this group of Islamists and minimize their impact on Saudi society.

Although its efforts have been successful, the future ability of the regime to maintain control of the opposition is not assured. Continued control of the formation and activities of informal networks which could be useful to a determined opposition will depend on decisions made by the Al Saud. Saudi Arabia stands at a crossroads; the regime could choose cooption and dialogue or it could use repression tactics. An examination of Pakistani and Egyptian government efforts to combat Islamist opposition will contribute to an understanding of which would be the wiser choice.

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<sup>86</sup> Dekmejian, 638. Also see Metz, 88-90.

<sup>87</sup> David Hirst, "Exiles' Schism Boosts Saudis," *The Guardian* (9 April 1996), 9.

## B. PAKISTAN

Seyyed Nasr states, “The Jama‘at is one of the oldest and most influential of the Islamic revivalist movements and the first of its kind to develop an Islamic ideology, a modern revolutionary reading of Islam, and an agenda for social action to realize its vision.”<sup>88</sup> This vision is of a Pakistan transformed into an Islamic state based on sharia, with Islam as the basis for politics, economics and culture.<sup>89</sup> To realize this vision, the Jama‘at-i Islami (the Islamic Party) has sought to achieve political power and use it to transform Pakistan.

Given the chaotic nature of Pakistani politics since the partition of India in 1947, one might expect that these attributes, coupled with the disciplined and focused organization imparted on the movement by its founder, Mawlana Sayyid Abu’l-A’la Mawdudi, would have positioned the Jama‘at to become a dominant political force. Despite these seemingly favorable conditions, Mawdudi and the Jama‘at never achieved electoral success. This prompts the question — why has the Jama‘at-i Islami failed to obtain significant political power in Pakistan?

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<sup>88</sup> Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama‘at-i Islami of Pakistan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), xiv. Also see Nasr, “Democracy and Islamic Revivalism,” *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (summer 1995): 264.

<sup>89</sup> Mumtaz Ahmad, “Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat of South Asia” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby(eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed*, vol. 1, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 459-464.

This thesis argues that the ruling oligarchy — composed of feudal, bureaucratic and military elites — has prevented opposition groups, such as the Jama‘at, from gaining significant popular followings or developing power bases by eliminating or controlling informal networks. By controlling the most viable tool for Islamist opposition to the state — informal patron-client, religious, occupational, and neighborhood networks — the various oligarchic regimes have prevented the Jama‘at from realizing its vision. Other explanations for this failure focus on the movement’s elitist nature and reluctance to use populist themes and methods to gain widespread support. Additionally, it has been argued that the revolutionary goal of transforming Pakistan into an idealized Islamic state has been hurt by the Jama‘at’s participation in the political process. While there is merit in these explanations, this thesis argues that examination of regime control and cooption of informal networks will best explain why the Jama‘at has failed to achieve political power and will allow one to evaluate the prospects for Islamist influence upon and ability to change Pakistan’s government.

This section first discusses the Jama‘at-i Islami’s organization, its significant challenges to Pakistani regimes since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, and alternative explanations for why the Jama‘at has not realized political power. To place regime responses to these challenges in perspective, the roles of kinship, ethnicity, and religion in Pakistan are examined and, finally, regime responses to Islamist challenges are discussed in the context of control or elimination of informal networks.



## 1. Jama'at-i Islami -- Organization & Challenges

Established in 1941 by Mawdudi, the Jama'at-i Islami was "...an ideological movement to promote Islamic values and practices in British India."<sup>90</sup> In 1947, with the establishment of Pakistan, Mawdudi split the Jama'at, separating the Pakistani organization from the Jama'at movement which remained in India. Initially, Mawdudi continued to stress — in order of importance — "the reform of the life and minds of individual Muslims," the "organization and training of virtuous men," social reform, and "reform of the government and political structure."<sup>91</sup> To further these objectives the Jama'at launched a massive publicity campaign in 1948 to gather support for its demand for an Islamic constitution. The organization grew to cover a large part of the country, with branches, study circles and reading rooms in every city and town. Additionally, the Jama'at "...organized an extensive program of relief work, mobile medical clinics dispensing free medical care, and an elaborate program of publication of books, pamphlets, and periodicals. In the major cities, a network of cell structures was created, each holding weekly workers' meetings, where issues of Islamic ideology and policies and strategies of the Jamaat were discussed."<sup>92</sup>

This campaign paid off with the passing of the 1949 Objectives Resolution, which stated that the Pakistani constitution would be based on the principle that sovereignty

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<sup>90</sup> Peter R. Blood (ed.), *Pakistan: a country study*, (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1995), 217.

<sup>91</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 28.

<sup>92</sup> Ahmad, 469-70.

belongs to God alone and that Muslims would be enabled to order their lives in accordance with Islamic teachings and requirements. The country appeared to be swept with enthusiasm for an Islamic order and the Jama'at was gaining the support of a large number of the educated, urban population. However, the Western-educated, modernist groups in control of the government began to fear this new force and hopes for a quick Islamization of the fledgling country were soon dashed; a hostile government was not about to let Pakistan fall into the hands of the Islamists through propaganda alone.<sup>93</sup>

In 1951 the Jama'at initiated a new plan of action, involving itself more directly in politics to further its Islamist goals for Pakistan. Elections in Punjab provided the first opportunity for the organization to directly back political candidates. Despite unsuccessful showings by the candidates the Jama'at endorsed, this marked an important shift in the ideology of the organization. Now the Jama'at was focused on two aims — clarifying the concept of an Islamic state and training a new generation of leaders who could shoulder the responsibilities of an Islamically-oriented administration, judiciary, media, and educational system.<sup>94</sup> An important part of this second aim was the nurturing of the Islami Jami'at-i Tulabah (IJT), or Islamic Society of Students.

The IJT was established in 1945 as a da'wah (missionary movement). It was greatly influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, which early IJT members

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 469-471. Mawdudi was jailed on several occasions; and the most serious incident was in 1953, when he was sentenced to death. Subsequently the sentence was commuted to life in prison, and then the conviction was overturned. Mawdudi was released from prison in 1955. Also see Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 471.



learned about from Said Ramazan, a brotherhood member living in Karachi.<sup>95</sup> IJT members proved to be as interested in politics as they were in religious work, and soon turned their attention to campus politics to counter the growth of leftist student organizations.<sup>96</sup>

This early conflict with Marxism, which escalated from egg throwing to greater violence, honed the IJT's political skills and its ability to mobilize the masses for opposition purposes.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, "[m]uch of the political strength of the Jamaat-i Islami, especially its ability to mobilize the masses to confront the government, depends on the IJT."<sup>98</sup> In addition to the IJT, the Jama'at also sponsors trade unions, other labor organizations, and professional associations.<sup>99</sup> The IJT, however, has proven to be the most significant of the organizations associated with the Jama'at.

Through the efforts of the IJT the Jamaat has been able to successfully penetrate and control the educational institutions of the country and organize the urban youth, who constitute one of its most important constituencies, under the umbrella of Islamic ideology. The IJT has helped the Jamaat to impose ideological censorship on educational institutions, neutralize the influence of secular, left-wing, and liberal-minded teachers, and intimidate political opponents. It has also helped the Jamaat to launch agitational movements, whose tactics included forced closing of educational institutions, street processions, violent protests,

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<sup>95</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 58-64.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ahmad, 492.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

demonstrations, and strikes. In short the IJT has helped the Jamaat build an image of an invincible political force in the country.<sup>100</sup>

After the failure in the Punjab elections of 1951, the next occasion for the Jama'at to test its growing strength presented itself in 1953. Another populist Islamic party, the Majlis-i Ahrar-i Islam (Society of Free Muslims) had a history of opposing the Ahmadis, a minority sect who followed the religious teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The orthodox ulama believe the Ahmadis stand outside the boundaries of Islam. With the passing of the Objectives Resolution in 1949 and the seeming loyalty of the state to Islam, the Ahrar became emboldened in their campaign against the Ahmadis. By 1952 the issue had become a national debate and social unrest resulted from the Ahrar stirring up the Punjabi populace, who were disgruntled because of a poor economic situation, high prices, and food shortages.<sup>101</sup>

The Jama'at took advantage of this popular discontent by organizing demonstrations to protest hikes in flour prices. This high profile was part of the Jama'at's efforts to keep attention focused on their calls for an Islamic constitution. The Ahmadi issue, however, soon overtook all efforts by the Jama'at, and Mawdudi felt obligated to side with the Islamic parties, who were opposed to government tolerance of the Ahmadis.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 131-133.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 136. Zafaru'llah Khan, an Ahmadi who openly acknowledged his religion, served on the viceroy's council at this time and later became Pakistan's foreign minister.

In March 1953 Mawdudi published the most comprehensive denunciation of the Ahmadis to that date — *Qadiyani Mas'alah (The Ahmadi Problem)*.<sup>103</sup> The government of Punjab openly endorsed the demands of the agitators, forcing the hand of the central government. The army placed Punjab under martial law and Mawdudi and a number of Ahrar leaders were arrested for violating martial law and “promoting feelings of hatred.” Mawdudi remained in jail until April 1955. By this time the government was inclined to link the Jama’at’s calls for an Islamic constitution with the mob violence seen in the Punjab, further solidifying government resistance to full-scale adoption of Islam in the structure of law and government.

Subsequently, the 1956 Constitution only recognized token demands of the Islamists, with no substantive provisions adopted. Still, Mawdudi and the Jama’at accepted it as an “Islamic” constitution, for it was feared that a more secular version would replace it if it was not quickly adopted. The Jama’at was willing to continue the fight for a more Islamic Pakistan through participation in the political process. This strategy was successful in the short-term, for in the Karachi municipal elections of 1958, the Jama’at won 19 of 23 seats it contested. Taking this as an encouraging sign, Mawdudi began preparing the Jama’at for the national elections which were to follow in 1959.<sup>104</sup>

Unfortunately for the Jama’at, the military also interpreted the municipal election results to mean that the Islamists were likely to perform well in the national elections.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 145-46.

General Ayub Khan, assisted by General Iskander Mirza, oversaw a coup in October 1958 and the country remained under martial law until 1962.<sup>105</sup> All political parties were outlawed during the martial law period, but the Jama'at, unlike other political parties, was able to remain active "...under the cover of religious, educational, and social welfare activities and was thus able to keep its organizational network, leadership, and cadre of workers intact."<sup>106</sup> Thus, the Jama'at was well-prepared to resume political activities openly when martial law was rescinded in 1962.

Mawdudi undertook a tour of Pakistan's major cities in 1963, speaking at mass rallies and attacking Ayub's political policies. Realizing that religion alone was not going to seriously challenge the military regime, the Jama'at entered into alliance with the secularist opposition to Ayub and at one point even endorsed the candidacy of Miss Fatima Jinnah for the presidency of Pakistan.<sup>107</sup> Another part of the Jama'at strategy was redirecting the efforts of the IJT from confrontation with the left to opposition to Ayub and his modernist policies. The agitation brought about by the IJT led to arrests and incarceration, further radicalizing the IJT.<sup>108</sup>

The last days of the Ayub regime were filled with urban-based revolutionary upheaval, not over Islam, but over issues such as wages, prices, and the economic dominance of twenty-two families. The main thrust of anti-Ayub efforts was focused on

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<sup>105</sup> Ahmad, 472. Also see Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 146-47.

<sup>106</sup> Ahmad, 472.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 474.

<sup>108</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 66.

issues of socioeconomic justice, political participation and regional autonomy.<sup>109</sup> The realization by the Jama'at that the initiative had passed to the secularists and socialists led to late support by Mawdudi for the status quo and he entered into discussions with Ayub on reforming the 1962 constitution with an eye to accommodating East Pakistan's Awami League and its call for autonomy.<sup>110</sup>

The Awami League and Zulfikar Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) continued the pressure against Ayub, resulting in his resignation in March 1969 and the accession of General Yahya Khan to the post of chief martial law administrator. The PPP and the Awami League continued to challenge the regime, with Bhutto's socialist platform questioning the centrality of Islam as the organizing principle for society. The Jama'at saw in Bhutto's atheistic socialism a serious challenge to the survival of Pakistan. As a result, the Jama'at fully joined the forces of the status quo to save the country from socialism and dismemberment.<sup>111</sup>

The IJT and other Jama'at-supported labor organizations carried the battle against the PPP and the Awami League into the streets. In this setting, Yahya announced that National Assembly elections would be held in December 1970. The Jama'at elected to participate in the elections as part its battle against the PPP and Awami League. Despite high expectations, the Jama'at was crushed at the polls, winning only 4 out of 300 contested seats. This defeat caused the Jama'at to reconsider its strategy, leading to the

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<sup>109</sup> Ahmad, 474.

<sup>110</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 160-61.

<sup>111</sup> Ahmad, 475.



decision to focus on power rather than electoral success in the future and to pay more attention to issues important to the people, such as food and housing.<sup>112</sup>

When the Yahya regime decided to take military action against the Awami League in East Pakistan, the Jama'at's followers, particularly students from the IJT, organized themselves into paramilitary units and fought alongside regular army troops against the secessionists and Indian forces. Although East Pakistan and India defeated the West Pakistani forces, the IJT members returned home as heroes, turning their elevated status into sweeping wins during campus elections.<sup>113</sup> This success positioned the Jama'at and the IJT to oppose Bhutto, who came to power following the surrender of Pakistani troops to the Indian army at Dacca on 16 December 1971.<sup>114</sup>

The Ahmadi problem once again led the Jama'at into confrontation with the regime. This time, however, the Jama'at was not a reluctant partner, but in the lead. In May 1974 some IJT students became involved in a scuffle at a train station with members of the Ahmadi sect. Within 24 hours the Jama'at and IJT were able to stage major protest meetings in five major cities. Within a month the entire law and order machinery of the Punjab was in shambles, due to the *Khatmi-e-Nabuwwat* (finality of Prophethood) movement instigated by the rail station incident.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>113</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 68. Also see Ahmad, 477.

<sup>114</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *Zulfi Bhutto of Pakistan: His Life and Times*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 169.

<sup>115</sup> Ahmad, 476-78.



This protest movement gave the Jama'at and IJT an opportunity to repair relations with the ulama and gain access to the mosques and madrasas. Relations in the past were strained by Mawdudi's critique of the ulama's archaic system of education and their pre-independence role in politics. The Jama'at exploited this access by holding all major meetings in mosques; most protest processions were started after Friday prayers. The *Khatmi-e-Nabuwwat* movement proved to be a dress rehearsal for the 1977 *Nizam-i Mustafa* (Order of the Prophet) movement, which was instrumental in toppling Bhutto. In the years between the two movements, the Jama'at strengthened its "...cells and chapters in labor unions, teachers' associations, and other professional organizations and institutions, including the civil service and the military."<sup>116</sup>

The IJT also remained busy expanding its influence during this time period. In the November 1976 student union elections held at the University of Karachi, just four months prior to the scheduled national elections, the IJT won a complete victory. This came on the heels of the IJT winning 24 of the 28 elections at other colleges and professional schools in Karachi. This success was crucial to the Jama'at consolidating its leadership of a "grand right-wing alliance," the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA). The PNA was a coalition of Islamic revivalist (the Jama'at), conservative and centrist parties formed to demand the enforcement of *Nizam-e Mustafa* and the ouster of Bhutto.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid. During the 1975 Enforcement of the Sharia campaign Jama'at workers were reported to have individually contacted 600,000 people in Punjab, Sind, the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and Baluchistan, with 100,000 of those people signing up as Jama'at supporters.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 478-79.

Bhutto's socialist policies, inflammatory rhetoric, and turn to the landed aristocracy for support alienated him from the mainstream and caused great resentment.<sup>118</sup>

When the PNA opposed Bhutto's PPP in the elections and lost, there were charges of election rigging by Bhutto's government. Protests over the alleged rigging escalated into a nationwide protest movement orchestrated largely by the IJT, which was able to mobilize its vast organization on campuses throughout Pakistan. Twenty years of "religiopolitical" struggle had trained the IJT cadres well in the art of confrontation with opposition forces.<sup>119</sup> By July 1977 the violence had resulted in uncontrollable lawlessness, leading to a successful coup d'état by the military under General Zia-ul-Huq.<sup>120</sup>

Zia promised that the establishment of a new social order based on *Nizam-e Mustafa* would be the cornerstone of his policies, and hopes remained high among the Jama'at and its followers that the dream of an Islamic state was finally being realized.<sup>121</sup> Following the coup the Jama'at cooperated closely with the new military regime and the IJT used government patronage to cleanse Pakistani campuses of leftist organizations.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Mumtaz Ahmad, "The Crescent and the Sword: Islam, the Military, and Political Legitimacy in Pakistan, 1977-1985," *Middle East Journal* 50, no. 3, Summer 1996, 374.

<sup>119</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 479.

<sup>120</sup> Ahmad, "The Crescent and the Sword: Islam, the Military, and Political Legitimacy in Pakistan, 1977-1985," 374.

<sup>121</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 479.

<sup>122</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 69.

In August 1978 the Jama'at joined the government, with four cabinet minister positions filled by Jama'at members.<sup>123</sup> Zia even allowed the Jama'at to place its cadres in strategic positions within the state-controlled media and the administrative and ideological branches of the government.<sup>124</sup> With such a large, well-organized, disciplined, and entrenched organization and an apparently Islamic-oriented military regime in power, one would expect the Jama'at to finally achieve the political power it had been seeking.

However, it has been argued that by 1979 the Jama'at had "...become an insignificant pressure group financed by conservative Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, landowners and businessperson[s]."<sup>125</sup> While it could be argued that the Jama'at remained more influential than this statement suggests, the fact remains that Pakistan did not become the Islamic state the Jama'at was striving to create and the Jama'at did not achieve electoral power. What could explain the inability of a movement at the peak of its power — with exceptional influence over informal networks in the educational, occupational, and urban areas — to translate its advantages into political success?

Seyyed Nasr has argued that factors built into the democratic political process can impede the progress of Islamic revivalism. He divides the decisive factors which impede

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<sup>123</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 481.

<sup>124</sup> Ayesha Jalal, "The State and Political Privilege in Pakistan," in Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi, (eds.), *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 173.

<sup>125</sup> Sohail Mahmood, *Political Dynamics of Contemporary Islamic Fundamentalist Movements: Comparative Case Study of Pakistan, Egypt and Iran* (Ph.D. diss., University of Northern Arizona, 1993), 387.

revivalism into four categories — “...the impact of participation in the political process, the nature and scope of the state’s reaction to the Jama’at, the extent of control of the Islamic discourse and vote bank, and the efficacy of the ideological posture and organizational model to the party’s political agenda.”<sup>126</sup> For Nasr, the most important factor causing the Jama’at’s constricted political development is participation in the political process.

Protracted involvement with the political process creates barriers to the further progress of revivalism and immunizes the political process to its challenge.<sup>127</sup> By tolerating debate and free assembly, regimes have deflected scrutiny away from their policies while appearing to champion democracy. This tactic also encourages other political forces to respond to the Islamist challenge and often causes ideological ruptures within the Islamist movement itself, ultimately splitting the Islamic “vote bank.”<sup>128</sup> Participation in the political process allowed the Pakistani “...state to formulate policies that would accommodate dissent at the expense of revivalism.”<sup>129</sup> Jordan’s experience with the Muslim Brotherhood has been very similar to this.

While Nasr sees participation in the political process as a long-term explanation for the failure of the Jama’at, he sees the state’s reaction as a short-term explanation. “If

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<sup>126</sup> Nasr, “Democracy and Islamic Revivalism,” 270.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>128</sup> Daniel Brumberg, “Islam and Democracy,” in James Piscatori, ed., *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis* (Chicago: The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991), 186-208.

<sup>129</sup> Nasr, “Democracy and Islamic Revivalism,” 271.



it [the Jama'at] failed to realize its aim of ruling Pakistan and eventually succumbed to the writ of its long-run involvement in the political process, it is due to direct state action.”<sup>130</sup> Each time the Jama'at made serious attempts at gaining electoral power, 1958 and 1977 in particular, the military acted directly to check the attempts. For Nasr, however, state action can at best serve only as a stop-gap measure.

This thesis argues, however, that state action to control and coopt informal networks, particularly the student and occupational networks, is the long-term explanation for the political failure of the Jama'at. A contributing factor to the state's ability to control and coopt these networks is the Jama'at's organizational model and ideological posture. Nasr states, “Even when the Jama'at addresses the concerns of the masses, its approach is elitist rather than populist.”<sup>131</sup>

Mumtaz Ahmad agrees with this assessment and points to the Jama'at's focus on “...elected assemblies, trade unions, campuses, professional organizations, publishing houses, seminars, conferences, think tanks, and survey research institutes” instead of mosques and madrasas as contributing to its political failure.<sup>132</sup> By adopting Western political techniques, organizational technologies and institutional forms, fundamentalist movements may inadvertently act as agents of change in their societies.<sup>133</sup> Jama'at workers themselves became concerned that the social welfare work and educational

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>132</sup> Ahmad, “Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia,” 485.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.



programs which were the hallmark of the Jama'at in the 1950's became neglected due to the focus on electoral politics.<sup>134</sup> The failure in electoral politics is largely attributable to neglect of the rural areas, where 70 percent of Pakistan's population lives.<sup>135</sup>

The Jama'at's elitist nature and tendency to neglect the masses made it easier for the different regimes to coopt and control informal networks, thereby marginalizing the Jama'at. The assessments of Nasr and Ahmad, while true in some measure and useful in explaining the Jama'at's failure, do not account for the active role governments took in manipulating kinship, ethnicity, and religion to counter the Jama'at. Regime actions, when placed in the context of Pakistan's social and political culture, best explain why the Jama'at never achieved political power.

## **2. Biraderi Politics and Islam — Tools for Cooption**

In 1947 Pakistan inherited a feudal social order in what had been the western provinces of India. The political situation roughly mirrored that of Saudi Arabia at the time of the oil bust; mass politics had taken only modest roots and traditional elites were firmly entrenched. Many of the traditional religious leaders represented and supported the status quo.<sup>136</sup> The situation has not changed much in the intervening years and Pakistan remains a country where land-based feudalism remains powerful and "...landed

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 486.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 509.

<sup>136</sup> Graham E. Fuller, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Pakistan: Its Character and Prospects* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1991), 20.

elites have built up transregional alliances through matrimonial, political and financial associations, while the ambitious and well-placed intermediate class — a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s — is demonstrably conservative and stability oriented.”<sup>137</sup>

For the average individual, ethnic, regional and, most importantly, family loyalties matter far more than national loyalties. Pakistani social life revolves around the *biraderi*, or group of male kin. Traditionally, *biraderi* referred to residents of a single village, but increased migration and land fragmentation have led to extended patrilineal groupings which maintain ties with the home village.<sup>138</sup>

Pakistani politics and the economy have come to be dominated by a very narrow stratum of elite families which control an extremely disproportionate amount of the country’s wealth.<sup>139</sup> It has been estimated that 6 to 7 percent of the population controls approximately 80 percent of the wealth, with 10 percent expending approximately 70 percent of Pakistan’s resources. In Pakistan access to resources equals wealth, and corruption in Pakistani politics has become legend.<sup>140</sup>

Another significant feature of Pakistani culture is its ethnic composition, which has a major impact on politics. The four main provinces in Pakistan are Punjab, Sind, NWFP, and Baluchistan and they respectively contain the Punjabi, Sindhi, Pakhtun and

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<sup>137</sup> Iftikhar H. Malik, “The State and Civil Society in Pakistan: From Crisis to Crisis,” *Asian Survey* 36, no. 7 (July 1996): 679.

<sup>138</sup> Blood, 77-78, 100-01.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>140</sup> Mahmood, 328.

Baloch ethnic groups. Punjab is the most populous province and its landed elite remain a favored social group, much to the dissatisfaction of other ethnic groups.<sup>141</sup> Punjabi dominance of the civil bureaucracy and army remains a source of contention in Pakistani politics.

Against this backdrop, Islam was intended by the Jama'at to be a unifying force. However, elitism and patrimonialism loomed large in shaping Pakistani politics. "Politics tended to reflect the stratified character of social classes in Pakistan where, in general, most citizens see political debates and contests as largely irrelevant to their lives."<sup>142</sup> What was relevant, however, in the daily lives of most Pakistanis was the *biraderi*. It was only natural then for political influence to be sought in terms of the *biraderi* — essentially in terms of patron-client informal networks.

Similarly, the Islam of the masses was not the revivalist, Sharia-oriented, and idealized Islam of Mawdudi and the Jama'at. It was the folk and popular form of Islam which dominated the rural areas of Pakistan. To influence the masses with Islam, the most effective vehicle was the informal networks of the mosque and the madrasas. Although the Jama'at on occasion used these networks, as they did during the *Khatmi-e-Nabuwwat* movement of 1974, they did not concertededly target them. The various oligarchic regimes — in the cauldron of competing *biraderi*, ethnic, and regional

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<sup>141</sup> Blood, 103-117.

<sup>142</sup> Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Civic Culture and Democracy in Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 36, no. 7 (July 1996): 645.

influences — did use and target these informal networks, which is how they were able to deny the Jama'at political power.

### **3. Regime Control of Informal Networks**

The strongest Jama'at challenges to the oligarchic regimes occurred between 1958 and 1977 and the most significant regime actions to counter Jama'at influence took place from the initial challenge in 1958 through the Zia regime, which ended in 1988. This latter time period will be covered during discussion of regime efforts to coopt and control informal networks.

Following the strong Jama'at showing in the Karachi municipal elections in 1958, Ayub outlawed the Jama'at and all other political parties. Still, the Jama'at was able to remain active during the martial law period through its affiliate organizations. Other measures were required to combat the Jama'at's growing strength. General Ayub moved to "...take the monopoly of interpreting Islam away from the Islamic parties to control the nature and scope of religion's interaction with society and politics."<sup>143</sup> By doing so, the government aimed to exclude the Islamists from the political process and subject them to state control.

Under the Waqf (endowment) Properties Ordinance of 1959, the government took over management of mosques and shrines, and religious endowments were nationalized. Additionally, Ayub gave the job of interpreting Islam to two ministries — interior and education and information and broadcasting. These ministries promptly launched a

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<sup>143</sup> Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, 150.

propaganda campaign questioning the loyalty of the Islamists, their knowledge of Islam, and even their moral and ethical standing. To devise a new vision of Islam, Ayub turned to the Institute of Islamic Culture in Lahore and the Islamic Research Institute of Karachi, which he created expressly for this purpose in 1961.<sup>144</sup> These institutes provided the intellectual rationale for the campaign against the Islamists.<sup>145</sup>

Regime efforts did impede the Jama'at's ability to push its agenda, but they also alienated a significant portion of the traditional ulama. The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 and family planning efforts were instituted by Ayub to restrict polygamy, regulate divorce procedures and improve the life of women.<sup>146</sup> These steps were also widely resisted and gave the Jama'at enough leeway to build an opposition to Ayub. This opposition was offset, however, by Ayub's efforts to involve the rural and bureaucratic elite in his new system of government, which he named "Basic Democracy."<sup>147</sup> The end result was that Ayub was able to stave off the Jama'at's opposition until 1969, when issues such as wages, prices and economic disparity forced Ayub to resign in favor of General Yahya Khan.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 150-151.

<sup>146</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 472.

<sup>147</sup> Mahmood Monshipouri and Amjad Samuel, "Development and Democracy in Pakistan: Tenuous or Plausible Nexus?," *Asian Survey* 35, no. 11 (November 1995): 976-977.

<sup>148</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 474-75.



Yahya faced a looming crisis in secessionist East Pakistan. The Jama'at, realizing the political initiative had shifted to the secularists in East Pakistan and the socialists in West Pakistan, moved to support the status quo and Yahya. Despite this rapprochement with the regime, the Jama'at fared very poorly in the 1970 elections, which Bhutto's PPP won in West Pakistan. Bhutto won through a grass-roots, biraderi-targeted campaign in his native Sindh, then became leader of Pakistan following the secession of East Pakistan and defeat of the army by India.

The Jama'at eagerly opposed Bhutto and his socialist policies, but Bhutto was very skilled at the politics of patronage. He offset the influence of his opposition through relying on elitist groups to bolster his regime. "Out of the top 50 leaders in his party, there were 27 landlords, six tribal chiefs, five businessmen, and seven middle class professionals but only one trade union leader."<sup>149</sup> Additionally, Bhutto attempted to a certain extent to coopt and appease the Islamists. The revised constitution of 1973 was drafted under the leadership of a Jama'at member of the National Assembly and turned out to be the most Islamic constitution to date.<sup>150</sup>

In the end, though, Bhutto was unable to balance different factions against one another indefinitely. His nationalization policies alienated a large enough portion of the traditional elites that the "grand right-wing alliance," the Pakistan National Alliance, was able to challenge the regime in the 1977 elections, and then violently oppose the regime when it suspected vote rigging. As previously mentioned, the Jama'at joined the

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<sup>149</sup> Monshipouri and Samuel, 978.

<sup>150</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 477.

martial law government of Zia in the year following the coup due to their high hopes that an Islamist government and state were in the making.

Although Zia proclaimed that Islamization was his goal and although he was believed to be a devout Muslim, his actions prove that for him Islam was just another tool to be used in the stabilization of Pakistan. Despite plans to implement a seemingly broad program of Islamization and symbolic moves toward implementing Islamic mores and laws in Pakistan, it is generally assessed as having been a token effort, aimed more at establishing his own legitimacy than at changing society. Ayesha Jalal dismissed Zia's Islamization as nothing more than "...fiddling to the chauvinistic strains in Pakistan's male-dominated society."<sup>151</sup>

Even though he appointed four Jama'at members as cabinet ministers in August 1978, Zia ensured they were largely ineffective. Entrenched bureaucrats and senior generals opposed any policy initiatives from the Jama'at ministers and not a single initiative cleared bureaucratic hurdles.<sup>152</sup>

Another step taken on the religious front was directed toward coopting the traditional lower middle class and religiously legitimizing the regime. The government sponsored religious festivals and rituals, created a religious network of *zakat* (alms tax) and *'ushr* (almsgiving), established *islah-i-mu'ashra* (reformation of society) committees, held gatherings such as the *milad-un-nabi* (celebrations of the birth of the Prophet), and sponsored *qirat* (recitations) and *na'at* (poetry in praise of Muhammad)

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<sup>151</sup> Jalal, 178.

<sup>152</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 481.

competitions.<sup>153</sup> His promises to protect the sanctity of the *chador* (veil) and *chardivari* (the four walls of a house) spoke directly to lower middle class values. These government-sponsored activities were aimed directly at minimizing the impact of the Islamists and at building informal networks between the regime and the masses.

Direct action to curb the Jama'at came in 1984 after the Jama'at became estranged from Zia, who was becoming wary of the IJT's growing political power. In 1978-1982 Zia encouraged the activities of the IJT to counter the PPP's student organizations. However, by 1982 these activities were seen in a different light; Bhutto had been executed in 1979 and the PPP was on the wane. Zia no longer saw himself as an isolated leader in need of legitimation from the Islamists, especially since he had found new allies among the nonpolitical ulama. As a result of the changed situation, Zia was able to hit at the basis of Jama'at power by banning all student unions and organizations in the country in February 1984.<sup>154</sup>

In 1986, Zia directed the provincial government of Sindh to remove a Jama'at member who had been elected mayor of Karachi and also had the Jama'at dislodged from the Karachi city administration so that he could install the ethnically-based Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM). "...[F]or the first time in the history of Pakistan, the state had taken the Islamic initiative from the Jamaat's hands."<sup>155</sup> Since then the Jama'at has not

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<sup>153</sup> Ahmad, "The Crescent and the Sword: Islam, the Military, and Political Legitimacy in Pakistan, 1977-1985," 383.

<sup>154</sup> Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia," 484.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

seriously challenged the governments which have ruled Pakistan and has not achieved its objective of forming a society where Islam is the basis for politics, economics and culture.

This failure can be traced to three things — the Jama'at's elitist ideology and organization, participation in the political process, and most importantly regime actions which have controlled and coopted the informal networks which are so useful in fomenting opposition to an authoritarian regime.

Through the effective use of *biraderi* politics, juxtaposition of ethnic and regional rivalries, and cooption of Islam, the various oligarchic regimes of Pakistan have been able to deny the Jama'at its attempts to gain political power and shape the discourse on Islam. In contrast, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, after a long arduous struggle similar to the Jama'at's, has emerged as the chief political opposition to the Mubarak regime in Egypt and remains capable of affecting discourse on Islam's role in society.

### C. EGYPT

Hasan al Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Mulimin*) in 1928 with the aim of returning Egyptian society to a state of purity, reforming it from within, and purging it of foreign domination and influence.<sup>156</sup> Starting as an Islamic protest movement against the forces of modernity and change, the Brotherhood evolved by the 1940's into a populist Islamic movement with a vision, like that of the Jama'at in

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<sup>156</sup> Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 51.



Pakistan, of Egypt as an Islamic state based on sharia, with Islam as the basis for politics, economics, and culture.<sup>157</sup> This vision, however, competed with strong currents of liberalism and nationalism, which were also active against foreign domination and influence.

Indeed, the forces of nationalism were strong enough to effect a revolution in 1952 and overthrow King Farouk. The Western-oriented liberal elite, under the leadership of Gamal Abdul Nasser and later Anwar Sadat, shifted Egypt toward a more liberal and open economic and political system.<sup>158</sup> Initial cooperation by the Muslim Brotherhood with Nasser's new order quickly turned to confrontation as the Brotherhood realized Nasser had no intentions of establishing an Islamic state. This confrontation eventually resulted in state suppression of the Brotherhood, and what appeared to be its extinction in 1965.<sup>159</sup> What then explains the Muslim Brotherhood's resurgence in the 1970's and its position in the 1990's as the chief opposition to the regime of Hosni Mubarak?

This thesis argues that despite concerted efforts by the Nasser regime and its successors to suppress and eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood, the Brotherhood has survived because of its use of informal networks and government failure to control or coopt those same networks. The Muslim Brotherhood, and other more radical and

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<sup>157</sup> Mahmud A. Faksh, *The Future of Islam in the Middle East: Fundamentalism in Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1997), 43.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Esposito, 129-131.



violent Islamist opposition groups, have developed popular followings and power bases by either establishing or joining voluntary associations and organizations, then cultivating informal patron-client, religious, occupational and neighborhood networks through them. Explanations for why the Brotherhood has remained an active political force invariably cite the failure of the government to meet the needs of its citizens and the ability of the Islamists to do so. This thesis argues that the key factor in Islamist influence is the informal networks which result from social services the Islamists provide for the masses. Islamist dominance of the social realm stems from government failure and at times inability to control or coopt the informal networks which the Brotherhood has found so useful. Furthermore, the continued cultivation of these networks ensures that the Brotherhood, though not strong enough to overthrow the government, will remain politically and socially relevant in Egypt.

This section will follow the same general format as the preceding section on Pakistan. First, the Muslim Brotherhood's organization and its significant challenges to Egyptian regimes will be discussed. To place regime responses to these challenges in perspective, the roles of kinship, class, and religion in Egypt are examined and, finally, regime responses to Islamist challenges are discussed in the context of control or elimination of informal networks.

## **1. Muslim Brotherhood — Organization and Challenges**

The Muslim Brotherhood initially recruited its members from the lower sections of the petit bourgeoisie, which had become active due to the rise of nationalism in Egypt

after the 1919 revolution.<sup>160</sup> From March to April 1919 Egyptians of all social classes participated in a popular uprising. This uprising was largely in response to Britain's actions during World War I, which included forced recruitment of labor and supplies and garrisoning of Commonwealth troops in Egypt. Soaring prices and unemployment also contributed to the dissatisfaction and social mobilization of the masses. This activism eventually resulted in Britain unilaterally declaring Egypt independent in 1922.<sup>161</sup>

Although Egypt was technically independent, Britain still maintained a strong hand in Egyptian politics, actively participating in intrigue between the monarchy and Parliament. This interference directly spurred the rise of nationalism and the Brotherhood's initial activity was focused on preaching Islam to counter European influences and providing services for the masses. By 1935 the organization had established trade schools and home-based textile factories in over 50 towns and villages in Cairo and the Nile delta area. Additionally, the Brotherhood established a network of social service institutions which dispensed assistance to rural migrants who had recently arrived in the cities.<sup>162</sup>

The Brotherhood developed a reputation as an organization genuinely concerned about the welfare and needs of the people and by the late 1930's the organization was one of the strongest in the country, with a constituency from a large cross-section of the population. Its strongest support came from the middle and lower classes, who saw Islam

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<sup>160</sup> Mahmood, 400.

<sup>161</sup> Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 46-49.

<sup>162</sup> Mahmood, 401.

as Egypt's salvation. "Indeed, the Brotherhood spoke to the masses in their own language, the simple language of Islam, affirming the belief that 'Islam provides thorough and sound solutions to all problems.'"<sup>163</sup> It was in the early 1940's that the Brotherhood moved to translate this large following into political influence, participating in the 1941 elections and also in the 1945 Parliamentary elections.<sup>164</sup>

Despite its popularity, the Brotherhood failed to win any seats in these government-rigged contests.<sup>165</sup> Regardless, the Brotherhood stayed at the forefront of the burgeoning opposition to the westernized elites and the European ties they cultivated. The organization's growing popularity and power caused alarm, resulting in the first government crackdown on the Brotherhood in 1948.<sup>166</sup> The Brotherhood was banned by the regime in early December, which prompted the assassination of Prime Minister Nuqrashi Pasha by a member of the Brotherhood on 28 December. This resulted in a "reign of terror" directed at the Brotherhood, culminating in the killing of Banna himself in February 1949 by state security agents and the dissolution of the Brotherhood.<sup>167</sup>

Although formally banned by the government, the Brotherhood continued to function outside the law, carrying out its social, educational, religious, and charitable

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<sup>163</sup> Faksh, 43. Faksh's quote on Islam is from Hasan al Banna, *What Is Our Message?* (Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Publications, 1974), 27.

<sup>164</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 180.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Faksh, 44.

<sup>167</sup> Mahmood, 403.

work through its network of organizations in towns and cities across Egypt. "...[T]his network of service structures helped to institutionalize the movement in Egyptian life, giving it strength and durability to become practically an autonomous society — a society within the larger society."<sup>168</sup> Testament to this strength and durability was the restoration of the legal status of the Brotherhood by the new Wafd government in 1950.<sup>169</sup>

The nationalists recognized the de facto presence of the Brotherhood and deemed the organization too valuable a resource to ignore. A rapprochement was effected and the Brotherhood, now under the leadership of Hasan al Hudaybi, cooperated with the nationalists, actively supporting the Free Officers' military revolt which overthrew King Farouk in 1952.<sup>170</sup> Brotherhood hopes for movement towards an Islamic state, similar to the vain hopes of the Jama'at in Pakistan after independence, were soon dashed by Nasser's emerging nationalist state. A new voice within the Brotherhood came to the fore, that of Sayyid Qutb, whose influential writings held the military-state dictatorship responsible for the decline of Islam and rise in *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic paganism).<sup>171</sup>

Increasing confrontation between the Brotherhood and Nasser's regime primed the government for repression. The Brotherhood was outlawed in February 1954 due to

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<sup>168</sup> Faksh, 44-45.

<sup>169</sup> Mahmood, 403. The Wafd Party originated in 1919 and was prominent in the nationalist movement to oust Britain from Egypt. See Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 46-56.

<sup>170</sup> Mahmood, 403.

<sup>171</sup> Faksh, 45.

Brotherhood opposition to the policies of Nasser's Revolutionary Command Council.<sup>172</sup> After an attempt on Nasser's life in October 1954, over 1,000 Brotherhood members were brought before military courts and the revolutionary Peoples Tribunal.<sup>173</sup> Qutb was arrested and imprisoned for ten years. During his time in prison, Qutb was subjected to torture, which further radicalized his world view. His prolific writings from prison turned increasingly confrontational and revolutionary, further antagonizing the state.

In 1965 another attempt on Nasser's life was blamed on the Brotherhood and this time the government's repression was absolute. Qutb, along with several other leaders of the Brotherhood, was hanged as the ringleader of an alleged conspiracy against the government. Thousands of Brothers were arrested and tortured, while others went underground or fled the country.<sup>174</sup> However, the demise of the Brotherhood's leadership and apparent destruction of the organization itself belied the ground truth — the Brotherhood did not cease to be a significant social, religious and political factor in Egyptian society.

Nasser's repression had only served to radicalize the Islamist movement. "The intensity of the crackdown, the harsh prison experience, and the prolonged underground existence radicalized the movement and gave rise to militant splinter groups that split from the Ikhwan."<sup>175</sup> Over the next decade numerous radical groups emerged, often

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<sup>172</sup> Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 60.

<sup>173</sup> Mahmood, 403.

<sup>174</sup> Esposito, 129.

<sup>175</sup> Faksh, 45.



under the leadership of former Brothers who had been influenced by a literal and militant interpretation of Qutb's writings.<sup>176</sup> These radical groups, however, did not represent the greatest threat to the Egyptian regime. The element of the Brotherhood which rejected the militant approach was to rebuild the organization, strengthen it, and ultimately become the main opposition to the regime in the 1990's.

The mainstream of the Brotherhood was given the opportunity to rebuild the movement by Anwar Sadat, who succeeded Nasser upon his death in 1970. Sadat felt threatened by the Nasserist and leftist elements, which led him to reach out to Islam in an attempt to reduce leftist influence, enhance his legitimacy and mobilize popular support. Ultimately, this "...led to the reassertion of a politicized Islam..." and "...the resurrection of a rehabilitated Muslim Brotherhood...."<sup>177</sup>

This resurrection was made possible by Sadat's need for political support and the Brotherhood's decision to adopt a policy of moderate reformism and denounce violence as a method to achieve its goals. While still not recognized as a political party, the Brotherhood was once again able to operate openly and recommenced its traditional methods for spreading its message — publishing magazines and establishing social

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<sup>176</sup> Esposito, 131.

<sup>177</sup> Esposito and Voll, 174.

welfare and financial institutions.<sup>178</sup> Additionally, two specific areas were targeted for cultivation — the neighborhood mosque and the university.<sup>179</sup>

These two sites would develop into the greatest sources of strength and power for the Brotherhood. During the 1970's the number of private mosques in Egypt doubled from approximately 20,000 to 40,000. "Sadat's early policy encouraged the building of private (*ahli*) mosques, which included not only formal buildings but also thousands of other structures and rooms added to hotels, hospitals, apartment complexes and other private dwellings."<sup>180</sup> Islamists used these spaces to engage in community work and relief services. The Brotherhood was spreading its message of "Islam is the way" by building a variety of educational and health care facilities that mixed the teachings of Islam with high-quality social services at nominal fees.<sup>181</sup> At the same time, and with government support, the Brotherhood was busy organizing student associations, or *jama'at islamiyya* (Islamic groups) as they came to be known, in the universities.

Much like Zia used the IJT in Pakistan in the late 1970's, Sadat actively supported the formation of Islamist student organizations to counter the influence of Nasserist and leftist organizations on campus. This strategy paid dividends, but not only the kind Sadat

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<sup>178</sup> Esposito, 131.

<sup>179</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, "Islamic Mobilization and Political Change: The Islamist Trend in Egypt's Professional Associations" in Joel Beinen and Joe Stork (eds.), *Political Islam: Essays from the Middle East Report (MERIP Reader)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 124.

<sup>180</sup> Esposito and Voll, 176.

<sup>181</sup> Denoeux, 154.

desired. By the mid-1970's the leftists had been marginalized on university campuses.

However, these groups also grew to provide vital goods and services to students.

In fact, their unmatched ability to address the students' needs is precisely what made the *jama'at* so successful. Students unable to buy expensive textbooks were happy to see the *jama'at* photocopy them and sell copies at only a fraction of the books' market prices. Students having difficulty taking notes in overcrowded and noisy amphitheaters were pleased to be able to buy low-cost copies of lecture notes distributed by the *jama'at*. ...Students finding it hard to study in noisy dormitories and unable to pay for expensive private tutoring eagerly joined the study groups and review sessions for examinations that the *jama'at* organized in local mosques or in places that they had asked the university authorities to set aside for prayer.<sup>182</sup>

Thus the Brotherhood developed contacts which would later prove useful in developing informal networks and recruiting new members. Organizational skills were also honed, as the *jama'at* dominated the student union elections of most faculties since the mid-1970's.<sup>183</sup>

Eventually the members of the *jama'at* moved on to professional life, where they used their student experience to become active in professional syndicates. By the late 1980's former *jama'at* members formed an influential constituency within several professional syndicates and by 1987 they won their first decisive victory in elections for the Engineer's Association. Even more surprising was the 1992 victory by Brotherhood

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>183</sup> Wickham, 125. Wickham does note that while Muslim Brotherhood students predominate in Cairo and Alexandria universities, more militant groups such as the Islamic Group and Jihad appear to have the advantage in several universities in Upper (southern) Egypt.

members in the Egyptian Bar Association elections.<sup>184</sup> By the end of that year the Brotherhood managed to control most of the professional unions.<sup>185</sup> The success of the Brothers in this arena, as in the student association arena, was attributable to government policies.

Sadat's program to bolster support and enhance the legitimacy of his regime included expanded educational opportunities, meant to fulfill and expand part of Nasser's social contract. A key promise made by Nasser was to provide a government job to every graduate with a secondary school or graduate degree. Sadat went beyond this, however, opening universities to an unprecedented number of students and extending the university system into the provinces. Between 1974 and 1978, seven new provincial universities were established.<sup>186</sup> The new graduates being pumped out of the educational system could not be absorbed into the public sector.

The Brotherhood, with financing from Islamic philanthropists (oil money from the Gulf in many cases), was able to provide jobs to many of these unemployed professionals. Even those employed by the state found it difficult to make ends meet and they too could end up working a second job at an Islamic hospital, school, or community

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 126-129.

<sup>185</sup> Elie Podeh, "Egypt's Struggle against the Militant Islamic Groups," in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Efraim Inbar (eds.), *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 47.

<sup>186</sup> Wickham, 122. The universities were built in Tanta, Mansura, Zagazig, Helwan, Minya, Minufiyya, and at the Suez Canal.



center.<sup>187</sup> As Saad Eddin Ibrahim puts it, “This strand of Islamic activism has therefore set about establishing concrete Islamic alternatives to the socio-economic institutions of the state and the capitalist sector.”<sup>188</sup> The Brotherhood and other Islamist groups filled an economic void left by the state and its ineffective policies.

Sadat, in an effort to improve the economy, implemented a new policy that came to be called *infitah* (opening or open door). The policy was meant to increase foreign investment, create greater participation in the private sector, allow more freedom for individuals to develop their own wealth and property, and relax currency regulations so that Egyptian entrepreneurs could have access to foreign money. While shops did fill with foreign goods, foreign companies built new modern hotels, and new wealth was created, not much was done for the Egyptian masses, since there was little investment in long-term industrial or agricultural projects.<sup>189</sup>

Sadat’s general preference for things western, his enactment of family law reforms, and the overture to Israel caused the Brotherhood and more radical Islamists to become more active and vocal in their opposition. “Sadat’s ‘open door’ (*infitah*) was seen as increasing Egypt’s economic dependence on the West, and promoting Western cultural penetration, from dress and behavior to television, music, and videos, benefitting an economically privileged, Westernized elite and thus contributing to a society in which

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 122-123.

<sup>188</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Egypt’s Islamic Activism in the 1980’s,” *Third World Quarterly* (April 1988): 643 as quoted in Esposito, 132-133.

<sup>189</sup> Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 82.



the rich got richer and the poor became poorer.”<sup>190</sup> When the more radical Islamists became increasingly violent, and the Brotherhood stepped up its criticisms and urged adoption of sharia, Sadat moved to control the opposition by declaring the separation of religion and politics, banning Islamic student groups, and attempting to nationalize Egypt’s mosques.<sup>191</sup>

This process reached its peak in September 1981 when Sadat ordered the arrest of 1,500 to 3,000 dissidents who represented a broad cross-section of society, including Islamic activists, lawyers, journalists, doctors, university professors and political opponents.<sup>192</sup> The “new Pharaoh,” as Sadat was called for his increasingly autocratic actions, pushed the militants to drastic action. In October 1981 members of the Tanzim al-Jihad assassinated Sadat. After an initial crackdown on all Islamists, the Brotherhood’s leadership managed to separate itself from other radical organizations and the 1980's became the decade of cooperation between the Mubarak regime and the Brotherhood.

Mubarak institutionalized Islam to bolster regime legitimacy and counter the growing appeal of the radical fringe. The Brotherhood in particular was courted by the regime and relations improved enough that the Brotherhood was allowed to participate indirectly, through coalition, in the 1984 and 1987 Parliamentary elections. Due to the

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<sup>190</sup> Esposito and Voll, 175.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Sources vary on the number of dissidents arrested. Mahmood cites 3,000 while Esposito and Voll cite 1,500.

limited number and selective nature of the parties allowed to participate, the scope of opposition on issues was narrow. Therefore, the personal prestige and patronage resources of the candidates played a major role in swaying votes.<sup>193</sup> This opening allowed the Brotherhood to multiply its economic and social welfare organizations and gain a central role in public welfare that eclipsed that of government agencies.<sup>194</sup>

Good relations continued until late 1992. The previously mentioned victories by the Brotherhood in various professional association elections, especially the Bar Association which was a liberal stronghold, alerted the regime to the strength and appeal of the Brotherhood. The Islamist reaction to the 1992 earthquake in Egypt gave evidence of a capability to deliver social services which the state was incapable of providing. Regime concerns about Islamist initiative were summed up by the words of Minister of the Interior Muhammad Abd al-Halim Musa, who uttered, "What is this becoming, a state within a state?"<sup>195</sup> In attempting to use Islam as a tool for legitimacy, Mubarak unwittingly strengthened his most serious opposition.

Responding to this threat to regime legitimacy, the government began taking legal and extra-legal measures in early 1993 and has continued them to date. Despite these efforts, the influence upon and potential capability of the Islamists to use informal networks for destabilizing purposes remains. This thesis argues that regime failure to coopt or control these networks best explains the success of the Brotherhood. The

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<sup>193</sup> Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 272.

<sup>194</sup> Faksh, 46.

<sup>195</sup> Wickham, 130.

efficacy of the specific policies and measures the regime took to counter Brotherhood use of these informal networks can best be explained in the context of Egypt's social and religious culture.

## 2. Family and Islam — Tools for Opposition

In the 1990's Egypt remains under the social, political and cultural dominance of an elite. This is a pattern retained since the days of the pharaohs. Although the personal and ideological values of the elite changed greatly with the 1952 revolution, the gulf between the urban elite and the masses remains large.<sup>196</sup> Historically, the governing elite's strategy to control the northern and southern periphery of Egypt has depended heavily on a secondary elite, referred to as the rural middle class. Upper Egypt's intermediary class in particular has been based on *'asabiyya* (tribal bonds), as well as wealth and land ownership.<sup>197</sup>

Nasser's 1952 Revolution was followed by a series of programs designed to broaden the base of support for the new regime. The previously mentioned expansion of education was one example. The most widely-hailed program introduced by Nasser, however, was land reform. In Upper Egypt it became entangled in the local power structure — powerful families, the traditional notables, managed to retain their land and power, at the expense of weaker and less powerful families. As a result, the sons of these

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<sup>196</sup> Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 113.

<sup>197</sup> Mamoun Fandy, "Egypt's Islamic Group: Regional Revenge?," *Middle East Journal* 48 (Autumn 1994): 614.

less powerful families received education and the heightened expectations that come with it, but not the land or the power.<sup>198</sup>

The family still remains the most significant unit of Egyptian society and kinship plays an important role in virtually all social relations.<sup>199</sup> “For the popular classes of Cairo, kinship is the most significant source of solidarity. Family connections help the poor households circumvent the legal/bureaucratic constraints to securing shelter, obtaining jobs and extending governmental subsidies.”<sup>200</sup> Diane Singerman argues that “...the family is an important avenue of participation that complements or parallels the formal political sphere.”<sup>201</sup> The family becomes involved in informal networks to satisfy its needs, and the arena where these ties are made is familiar to this discussion.

Discussions of civil society in Egypt stress the importance of neo-traditional institutions, which have continued to be centers of social and political activity. These institutions are primarily the mosque and church-based associations, with the majority of these remaining beyond the control of the government. The use of community places for social and political activity dates back to the Pharaonic era — what is remarkable about

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 615.

<sup>199</sup> Metz, *Egypt: a country study*, 124.

<sup>200</sup> Asef Bayat, “Cairo’s Poor: Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity,” *Middle East Report* (Winter 1997): 6.

<sup>201</sup> Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 49. Singerman makes a very persuasive argument about the centrality of informal networks in the daily life of the urban masses, how powerful a tool these networks are for the people who manipulate them, and how pervasive these networks become.



their current use is that they are “...used by social movements that have modern features, such as their type of education and organization, to recruit and mobilize supporters against other institutions and practices of society.”<sup>202</sup>

It is in an environment of scarcity, where ties of kinship are primary, and where informal networks proliferate, that the government has attempted to control its Islamist opposition. The failure of the government to provide for the needs of its citizens has allowed the Islamists to gain influence and challenge the legitimacy of the government. The policies designed to counter the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood must be evaluated in this context.

### **3. Regime Inability to Control Informal Networks**

The Muslim Brotherhood’s most serious challenges to the Egyptian regime have occurred as a direct result of work done in three arenas. The strength of the Brotherhood in the late 1970's was a result of the organization’s dominance of student associations. During the early 1990's, the challenge to the ruling elite came in the professional syndicates. As background to this specific work, the Brotherhood since its inception in 1928 has continually used the neighborhood mosque, and the social service networks run from it, to build informal networks of influence.

Regime responses have varied, but repression has been one recurring theme. The use of police and military force, imprisonments, torture, and executions have radicalized

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<sup>202</sup> Mustapha Kamil Al-Sayyid, “A Civil Society in Egypt?,” in Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. 1 (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 295.



the Islamist movement as a whole, and in particular led to the splintering of the Brotherhood during the 1950's and 1960's. Far from eliminating the Islamists as an opposition, the repression and formal bans served to drive the opposition underground, to make them focus on the cultivation of informal networks to get their message across. Often, the masses have sympathized with the Islamists, who are part of their everyday lives, who speak the same language as they do, and are concerned about their needs and welfare.

Additionally, the regime has not been able to maintain constant pressure against the Brotherhood. After Nasser's death, Sadat found it necessary to rehabilitate the Brotherhood to balance Nasserist and leftist forces. Mubarak in turn found it convenient to reduce pressure on the Brotherhood after Sadat's assassination in the early 1980's. This was part of his attempt to coopt conservative Islam, to increase the state's legitimacy and marginalize the radical Islamists. In both cases the lifting of pressure allowed the Brotherhood to make impressive gains in terms of influence and also in increasing the scope and depth of its social service networks. At best the arrangements resulted in questionable benefits for the regime, with the downside of increased Brotherhood influence. Official religious establishment and government-controlled media were often undermined by fiery sermons delivered by charismatic preachers in private mosques.<sup>203</sup> At other times the official position offered by the *ulama* differed little from that of the Brotherhood. The impact of mobilizing the *ulama* on behalf of the

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<sup>203</sup> Esposito and Voll, 176.

government does not seem to enhance the government's legitimacy, but instead contributes to the credibility of the Islamists.<sup>204</sup>

A second recurring theme has been efforts to reform the economy, with the intent of being better able to meet the needs of the citizens. Sadat's *infitah* and Mubarak's efforts to privatize the state sector and administer international aid funds from the World Bank in 1994 are representative of Egypt's experiences in this realm. The *infitah*, as mentioned previously, was largely unsuccessful and contributed to resentment from the masses. Western money benefitted relatively few people and the institutions built for the masses were inferior to the product offered by the Brotherhood.

Islamic social welfare institutions are better run than their state-public counterparts, less bureaucratic and impersonal...They are definitely more grass roots oriented, far less expensive and far less opulent than the institutions created under Sadat's *infitah* (open door policy), institutions which mushroomed in the 1970's and which have been providing an exclusive service to the top 5% of the country's population.<sup>205</sup>

In the south, the *infitah* was actually used by old and powerful feudal families to reverse some of the changes which occurred during Nasser's land reform program. In some instances less powerful families were evicted by notables, backed up by government troops, from lands redistributed under the land reform program.<sup>206</sup>

Efforts at privatization also followed the pattern of economic policies being distorted to favor elites. One reform necessary to facilitate broadly-based economic

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<sup>204</sup> Al-Sayyid, in Norton (ed.), 292.

<sup>205</sup> Ibrahim, 643 as quoted in Esposito, 133.

<sup>206</sup> Fandy, "Egypt's Islamic Group: Regional Revenge?," 616.

growth is privatization of bloated, inefficient public sector enterprises. Only a few of more than 300 such enterprises targeted for privatization have been sold, primarily due to the way the procedure has been regulated.

Public-sector holding companies have been allowed to retain proceeds from the sale of companies they control. This results in the sell-off of only the most unprofitable enterprises, with proceeds from those rolled into other public undertakings. “The primary beneficiaries of this sector are the approximately 5,000 comparatively wealthy Egyptians who comprise the senior management and members of the executive boards of the state-owned enterprises, in addition to the technocrat-politicians with whom they share economic rents.”<sup>207</sup>

Economic policies which do not benefit the masses will not generate attitudes of loyalty toward the regime. Policies which blatantly favor the elite will in the long run lead to a loss of legitimacy for the government. In the face of competing Islamist networks of social and economic support services which rival and even supplant the government’s, loss of legitimacy comes sooner rather than later.

Specific regime actions have centered primarily on combating the Brotherhood’s activities in mosques and curbing their influence in professional associations. After unleashing the forces of Islam to weaken the left, Sadat found the destabilizing potential of the Brotherhood and other Islamist groups alarming. During the late 1970’s Sadat announced that all private mosques would be nationalized. Out of 46,000 mosques,

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<sup>207</sup> Cassandra, “The Impending Crisis in Egypt,” *Middle East Journal* 49 (winter 1995): 14.

however, only 6,000 were controlled by the Ministry of Waqf. The remaining 40,000 were financially independent and the regime did not have the resources to actively supervise such a great number of mosques.<sup>208</sup>

Mubarak also issued a futile announcement, in 1985, stating that all mosques would be nationalized. The government did manage to nationalize a few mosques, but with limited personnel and money could undertake no large scale effort. Another round of announcements was issued in 1992, with the first being an October declaration by the ministry of religious affairs stating that all sermons at state-controlled mosques would be subject to approval by government officials. Additionally, the construction of private mosques would be curbed. In November the minister of religious affairs announced that all private mosques would be nationalized.<sup>209</sup>

This latest announcement was in response to successful recruitment efforts by Islamic activists. Only 30,000 of the 170,000 mosques in Egypt in 1993 were administered by the Ministry of Waqf. Once again the desired results were thwarted by a shortage of personnel and funds, but even more importantly also by tacit cooperation between Islamists and state employees at the lower rungs of the bureaucracy. The effort was infeasible in any case:

According to the Ministry of Pious Endowments general director, to maintain a government mosque costs about £E 6,000 per year, and thus the government can only afford to incorporate 1,000 mosques each year, rather than the 10,000 it would incorporate were the funds available. In addition to budgetary constraints, he explained, the government already

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<sup>208</sup> Esposito and Voll, 176.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 182



has a shortage of 40,000 *imams* (prayer leaders), as compared to some 5,000 Azhar graduates in 1992, of whom only 3,000 showed up for work.<sup>210</sup>

While efforts to police the mosques were mostly futile, regime efforts to curb Brotherhood influence in the professional syndicates had more of an impact.

As discussed previously, the Brotherhood emerged as a major force in the professional syndicates in the 1980's. The surprise victory of the Brotherhood in the Bar Association elections in September 1992 signaled growing strength and influence. The government was then forced to watch as Islamist relief organizations provided emergency services to earthquake victims in Cairo the following month. Mubarak, having seen enough of the growing Islamist influence, took immediate action to curb Brotherhood influence in professional syndicates.<sup>211</sup>

In February 1993 a new law regulating professional associations was quickly proposed and passed in Parliament. The law stipulates "...that unless 50 percent of all members vote in the first round of association elections or 33 percent in a subsequent round, the results will be voided and the association placed under the supervision of a panel of appointed judges."<sup>212</sup> The law has been criticized as being explicitly designed to dislodge Islamic leaders — most syndicate elections prior to this law experienced relatively low turnout, which gave the Islamists, with their honed organizational skills

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<sup>210</sup> *Akhir Sa'a* (December 1992) and *Middle East Watch*, "Egypt: Human Rights Abuses Mount in 1993," as cited in Wickham, 124-125. Azhar is the religious university which educates imams.

<sup>211</sup> Esposito and Voll, 185.

<sup>212</sup> Wickham, 132.



and superior networking abilities, a decided advantage. Subsequent legislation further changed election procedures in the unions and professional syndicates, bringing the councils for these organizations under the supervision of the judiciary.<sup>213</sup>

In April 1994 the Parliament extended the Emergency Law, initially implemented after Sadat's assassination, for another three year period.<sup>214</sup> In addition to these measures, action was taken to disenfranchise the Brotherhood and restrict its members from participating in the 1995 national elections.<sup>215</sup> During April 1997 municipal council elections, Brotherhood activists were arrested and detained for "stirring up the masses" on the eve of elections.<sup>216</sup>

Once again the cycle of repression and accommodation has turned. It is unlikely that the Mubarak regime will be able to break the Brotherhood. The more likely outcome is increased radicalism and regime alienation of the masses.

#### **D. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SAUDI CASE**

The Egyptian and Pakistani cases are illuminating in comparison. Although the Jama'at i-Islami has been one of the most influential Islamist parties in the world, it has

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<sup>213</sup> Faksh, 54.

<sup>214</sup> Podeh, 54. The Emergency Law gives the government great leeway with suspected criminals and suspends due process requirements.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>216</sup> United Press International, "Egypt Holds Elections, Nabs Islamists," [<http://www.nlsearch.com>], (7 April 1997).

never achieved its goal of establishing an Islamic state with sharia as the basis for politics, economics and culture. This failure can be traced to the Jama'at's elitist nature, to participation in the political process, and most importantly to regime actions which have controlled and coopted the informal networks which are so useful in fomenting opposition to an authoritarian regime.

The various oligarchic regimes of Pakistan have been able to thwart the Jama'at's attempts to gain political power and shape the discourse on Islam by using biraderi politics, exploiting ethnic and regional rivalries, and coopting Islam. Merely allowing participation in the political process would not have been enough to minimize the impact of the Jama'at. Without a military coup in 1958, it is very possible the Jama'at would have performed well in the national elections, gaining a toehold which the military, bureaucratic and landed elites could not have dislodged. By acting directly, the traditional elites bought enough time to develop policies designed to control and coopt informal networks, which in the end curbed the power of the Jama'at.

In contrast, the government of Egypt has been unable to develop and implement policies which would control or coopt the informal networks and associations which the Muslim Brotherhood has exploited so successfully. This failure can be traced to relative alienation of the ruling elite from the masses, a lack of financial and personnel resources, and most importantly the grass roots nature of the Brotherhood's *da'wa*, or call to God. The government finds itself unable to compete with the extensive social services provided by the Islamists, while at the same time being unable to benefit from cooption

of Islam to legitimize the state. The bottom line remains that the masses will trust those who fulfill their needs.

Ironically, the Egyptian government finds itself unable to liberalize or privatize its economy due to clientelism within its own ranks. Without improving its ability to provide for the needs of the citizenry, the regime can not risk opening the political system to free and fair competition. On the other hand, repression as a tool for keeping the opposition at bay is not a viable long term solution unless the government is willing to live with constant turmoil and the continual threat of armed insurrection.

The Al Saud are fortunate to have a more manageable situation within the kingdom. They are also fortunate to be able to learn from the experiences of others who have faced Islamist opposition. Though no two societies are exactly alike, there are general lessons to be learned from the Pakistani and Egyptian experiences and these lessons are applicable to the Saudi case. Indeed, these lessons may be useful in determining the possible nature of Saudi civil society in the future.

First, the Saudi regime cannot afford to lose touch with the masses, as the Egyptian regime has done to some degree and as the Jama'at was never in a position to do. The maintenance and reciprocity of informal ties, such as those exercised in the majlis and those maintained with the commercial elite, will be key to continued strength of the Saudi regime. Second, repression is not a tool which confers legitimacy upon a regime. The Al Saud have not been as violent in containing their opposition as the Egyptian government has, but they would not be wise to consider repression an option.

Third, movement in the opposite direction of repression is recommended by the Pakistani experience. An open political process has been key in minimizing the impact of the Jama'at. As previously stated, protracted involvement with the political process creates barriers to the further progress of revivalism and immunizes the political process to its challenge.<sup>217</sup> As the Egyptian case shows, political participation is only effective at creating barriers to revivalism if it is consistently allowed. It is not a perquisite to be withdrawn upon a whim.

Banning an activist group from participation in the political process provides that group with advantages and also eliminates certain risks. The Islamists in Egypt, banned from participating in politics, have been free to offer specific indictments of the government while not having to offer their own specific solutions to what seem like intractable problems. As the Jama'at can attest, it can be much harder to change the system while working within it.

Finally, the Saudi regime cannot allow economic reform to be hijacked by the economic interests of the royal family. There are disturbing parallels between the blatant protection of self-interest shown by the Egyptian elite in their efforts to privatize and develop the Egyptian economy and the penchant for the Al Saud to use position and influence to place their economic interests ahead of those of the country. Instead, the Al Saud have the opportunity to use both governmental regulation and informal networks in a beneficial manner, to ensure that the needed liberalization of the Saudi economy is

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<sup>217</sup> Nasr, "Democracy and Islamic Revivalism," 271.

conducted fairly and efficiently. If they do so, they should find regime stability and legitimacy enhanced.

The three case studies highlight the importance of informal networks in societies which are based on kinship, ethnicity and religion. So long as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt remain urban societies driven by ties of kinship, divided by ethnicity and region, and struggling with the role of religion in society, informal networks will have the ability to act as stabilizing or destabilizing factors. The manner in which they are used depends upon the intent and skill of those manipulating them. In the Saudi case, the opportunity exists for these networks to be utilized in a positive manner, particularly in a way which can help liberalize the Saudi economy while contributing to regime stability.





#### IV. IMPACT UPON SAUDI CIVIL SOCIETY

*The concept of civil society used herein signifies the part of society that is a distinct sphere from the state, and is composed of a network of political, economic, social, educational, professional, and religious institutions, that lobby government for their own interests, rather than the interests of state.*<sup>218</sup>

This thesis has argued thus far that Saudi control of informal networks assures the ruling family of political stability in the midterm. However, Saudi social control is not limited to informal networks. The thesis argues below that the regime has effectively shaped and coopted civil society as well, further strengthening its position in society and contributing to regime stability. This effort reinforces control of informal networks, since civil society organizations are often places where informal networks are developed and nurtured.

The literature on rentier theory argues that civil society in rentier states has been weakened by the impact of oil revenues, which have allowed the state to undercut existing social groups and preempt the formation of new ones.<sup>219</sup> External rents funneled directly to state governments resulted in distributive states where the rulers became financially independent from domestic productive groups. In turn, it is argued, domestic productivity stagnated, extractive capacities of the state withered, and rulers became

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<sup>218</sup> Ahmad S. Moussalli, "Modern Islamic Fundamentalist Discourses," in Norton, vol. 1, p. 81.

<sup>219</sup> Jill Crystal, "Civil Society in the Arabian Gulf," in Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. 2 (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 260.

isolated from the societies they ruled.<sup>220</sup> In particular, new merchant elites had been created to help displace the old merchant elite and this new elite was weaker due to total dependence on the state.

More importantly, rentier states were assessed to be less stable than other states which had gone through the developmental process of elite cooption and coercion that accompanies extraction of taxes. As a result, the oil states never developed the institutional capability to coopt and coerce systematically. "Oil revenues, by precluding the coalition building that is crucial to stability, have left these regimes vulnerable."<sup>221</sup>

Another danger of weak civil society in these states concerns their perceived ability to cope in the modern international economy. With the economic downturn, resulting from lowered oil prices and amplified by the huge cost of the 1990-1991 Gulf War, came urgent calls for economic reform in the rentier states. To lighten the heavy fiscal burden on suddenly constrained budgets a number of steps were recommended, including cuts in subsidies, privatization, and the opening of Gulf economies to greater domestic and international competition.

"...[I]n the modern international economy of information technologies, discriminating consumers, and intense competition, only economies which are less

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<sup>220</sup> Hootan Shambayati, "The Rentier State, Interest Groups, and the Paradox of Autonomy," *Comparative Politics* 26, no. 3 (April 1994): 308-309.

<sup>221</sup> Jill Crystal, *Oil and politics in the Gulf: Rulers and merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; rev. ed., Glasgow: Bell and Blain Ltd., 1995), 194.

centralized than those of the Arab world stand a chance of survival.”<sup>222</sup> In short, these economies need to be liberalized. For three reasons, expanded political participation is necessary to liberalize economically. First, subsidy cuts are equivalent to tax increases, and taxation without representation begs for opposition. Second, a stable legal environment is required for a market economy to function. Finally, modern information technology and unfettered access to information are a necessities for markets to function effectively today. An authoritarian society which represses information will be ill-equipped to compete in international markets.<sup>223</sup>

Saudi Arabia’s first attempts at economic reform in the mid-1980's immediately failed. The state-sponsored private sector formed a united front and used the Confederation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce to demand protectionist measures and other concessions from the state. “Strong tribal ties between the state-created business class and the Saudi government precluded the successful implementation of a mild set of economic reforms that aimed not so much to tax or regulate but merely to prune existing subsidies.”<sup>224</sup> The concessions won by business were in direct opposition to the state’s aims of cutting spending and liberalizing prices.<sup>225</sup> The failure to implement reform was

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<sup>222</sup> Alan Richards, “Economic Pressures for Accountable Governance in the Middle East and North Africa,” in Norton, vol. 1, p. 55.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>224</sup> Chaudhry, “The price of wealth: business and state in labor remittance and oil economies,” 117.

<sup>225</sup> Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, “Economic Liberalization and the Lineages of the Rentier State,” *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 1 (October 1994): 10.

viewed as an example of patronage gone bad, with a greedy elite unwilling to sacrifice profits for the good of the country. Subsequent events were to be even more alarming.

After the Gulf War the economic situation in Saudi Arabia had deteriorated even further. A larger population, steadily growing numbers of unemployed, budget deficits, and flat oil prices were the backdrop for the secular and Islamist petitions discussed in Chapter III. In the context of increased opposition to the regime and a reduced capacity for distribution of benefits, the regime could not afford another failure. Another failure to reform would seriously impair the ability of the state to provide for the needs of the citizenry in the long term.

Yet, looked at from another angle, the reform failure challenges the notion that authoritarian governments result in stunted civil societies which are easily manipulated by the ruling elite.<sup>226</sup> The activities of the Saudi Chambers of Commerce show at least one segment of society unwilling to be easily manipulated by the Al Saud when interests are at stake. Furthermore, an examination of the activities of the merchant class and the Chamber of Commerce organizations reveals two important details. First, the agenda of the Chambers is more than simple protection of the economic privileges of the businessmen who belong to them. Second, the regime retains the ability to exert influence upon the merchant class, the chambers, and the informal networks which grow from them.

Prior to the displacement of the Hijazi as the dominant merchant elite, the merchants won formal representation in the government through the Majlis al-Shura in

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<sup>226</sup> Norton, vol. 2, p. 5.



the 1930's. This forerunner to the recently reconstituted Majlis al-Shura was composed of prominent Hijazis from the major merchant families and provided a direct link between the Hijazi merchants and the King.<sup>227</sup> Unification of the national market and consolidation of the authority of the Al Saud resulted in centralization of national regulatory institutions and eventual replacement of the Hijazi by the Najdi as merchant elites. When the Ministry of Commerce was created in 1954, a systematic program for the expansion of the scope of commerce and industry included consultation with Chambers of Commerce as a key ingredient. "...[T]he growing corporatist relationship between the chambers and the government provided the channels of communication through which private-sector preferences became policy."<sup>228</sup>

The most important aspect of this relationship was that merchants were protected against "...flagrant conversion of political power to profit..." by the royal family and government officials.<sup>229</sup> A 1956 law prohibiting the participation of civil servants and princes in private business was strengthened and stringently enforced when several ministers were found to be engaging in private business ventures.<sup>230</sup> By the time oil

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<sup>227</sup> Kiren Aziz Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 71. Chaudhry indicates the scope of activities overseen by this first Majlis al-Shura was broad enough that the conventional wisdom of Ibn Saud as absolute monarch should be questioned. In fact, evidence indicates he was just one of the actors and institutions in the Hijaz and that his decrees were often disputed and overturned.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 85-87.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

revenues started to roll in, however, the Saudi Chambers of Commerce were state-funded, the Hijazi were marginalized, and the new Najdi elite began using the chambers to gain access to key ministries, thus supplementing informal access gained through numerous joint projects with bureaucrats and members of the royal family.<sup>231</sup>

A move by the regime in 1981 to place all the Chambers under the umbrella of the Riyadh-based Saudi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture institutionalized the ascendance of the Najdi elite. The confederation had exclusive rights to bargain with the government on issues relating to economic policy. During the recession, these institutions and the informal networks formed in them were mobilized to defeat reform efforts, particularly through the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce.<sup>232</sup>

The demands of the Saudi business elite were increasingly expressed through the institutional medium of the chambers of commerce. The changing role of the Riyadh Chamber, and of the Saudi Confederation of Chambers in general, reflected the rise of a peak organization empowered to articulate business demands.<sup>233</sup>

It is not surprising then that the regime would move to coopt the chambers before announcing new austerity measures in 1995 designed to reduce the government deficit. The measures included higher charges for visas, gasoline, refined products, utilities, domestic airfare, and domestic telephone service. In a powerful move to marginalize the

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<sup>231</sup> Chaudhry, "The price of wealth: business and state in labor remittance and oil economies," 129-130.

<sup>232</sup> Chaudhry, *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East*, 160.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 290-291.

Najdi business elite and align the government with the self-sustaining economies of the Hijaz and oil-based region of al-Hasa, the King reshuffled the cabinet, replacing sixteen of twenty-eight ministers and reassigning two portfolios. Additionally, the King made highly public conciliatory gestures toward the eastern province's Shi'a communities. The new cabinet was virtually without Najdis and had a high representation of Hijazis, suggesting "...a change in the life cycle of the oil state..."<sup>234</sup>

A strong political message was sent to the Najdi clients of the Al Saud, indicating the regime would not tolerate interference with efforts to reform the economy. In August 1996 the president of the Eastern Province Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hamad A. Al-Zamil, announced he would be taking over as chairman of the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CSCCI), inciting a controversy. The council positions for the twenty-one chamber organizations are the only elected positions in Saudi government or industry. The sitting chairman of the CSCCI announced in May 1996 that he was stepping down, but elections were not scheduled until November. The premature announcement prior to elections leads one to believe that the move was orchestrated at the highest levels. Of course, Al-Zamil was elected to the chairmanship in November and the chairmen of the Jeddah and Abha chambers were elected deputy chairmen of the CSCCI board.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 298-299.

<sup>235</sup> See Rashad Awkasho and Edgar C. Cadano, "SCCCI denies differences in election of president," *Saudi Gazette* (18 August 1996): 1 and Saeed Haider, "Al-Zamil assumes chairmanship of CSCCI," *Arab News* (11 November 1996).

A government decision to expand the councils of the chambers and appoint one third of the representatives was another step to strengthen control of the chambers. The additional representatives are now appointed by the Ministry of Commerce.<sup>236</sup> This is not to say that the government is clamping down on the chambers. On the contrary, it appears the chambers are being given greater responsibility for development of the private sector and the “Saudiization” program.<sup>237</sup>

The chambers are very active in efforts to match financiers with private sector businessmen, having been tasked to do so by the government.<sup>238</sup> Additionally, the chambers have been given the main responsibility for training young Saudis for various types of jobs now held by expatriate workers. Ambitious goals have been set in the five-year plan for 1996-2000, for instance, to replace some 319,000 expatriate workers with Saudi citizens. To help accomplish this goal, and also to reduce unemployment, the chambers have set up training programs in partnership with private industry.<sup>239</sup>

The commercial sector of society appears far from “stunted” in light of this activity. Indeed it appears that the chambers could represent a model for other types of

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<sup>236</sup> Habib Badr, “Al-Jeraisy wins RCCI elections,” *Arab News* (13 December 1996).

<sup>237</sup> *Saudi Gazette*, “Majeed stresses chamber’s role in Saudiisation,” (26 June 1996).

<sup>238</sup> Javid Hassan, “Govt policy on private sector pays off: Al-Assaf,” *Arab News* (5 January 1997).

<sup>239</sup> John Cooper, “Putting the kingdom to work; encouraging Saudi Arabians to join the work force,” *Middle East Economic Digest* 40, no.14 (5 April, 1996): 55. Also see *Saudi Arabia* 14, no. 1, “Training Saudis for Technical and Vocational Careers” (spring 1997): 13-17.



organizations which could work within the political space. The example of Kuwait since the Gulf war could be a harbinger of the way civil society will develop in Saudi Arabia:

...[C]ivil society organizations — be they “traditional” like tribes or religious groups, or “modern” like chambers of commerce, labor unions, or social clubs — continue to be important elements in the political and social life of these states. ...They provide the organizational basis and the social space for citizens to meet, to talk, and to develop relationships that sometimes cut across family, tribal, and sectarian lines. When permitted, as in Kuwait since liberation, they can form the basis of what are, in all but name, political parties. They are proof that “culture,” whether conceived in tribal or Islamic terms, is not an impediment to social or political organization in these states.<sup>240</sup>

The civil space in Saudi Arabia has already begun to expand, as King Fahd in early July 1997 expanded the number of representatives to the Majlis al-Shura by thirty, for a total of ninety members. The national Chambers of Commerce are well-represented in the Shura and the King has set a definite tone by appointing young, accomplished problem-solvers.<sup>241</sup> Although the Shura has no legislative ability, meaningful power may gradually develop in this body.

In addition to nurturing civil society, the government could use the chambers in the bid to privatize. Privatization has been pursued only half-heartedly until now. Higher than expected oil revenues have resulted in improved budget forecasts, limiting the pressure to privatize inefficient industries. For real privatization to occur, the state must end subsidized inputs and controlled prices, rewrite commercial codes, and, most

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<sup>240</sup> Gause, *Oil Monarchies...*, 88.

<sup>241</sup> Kevin Taecker, “Private Sector Growth, Fiscal Discipline and Planning: A Long-term View of the Saudi Economy,” *Saudi Economic Survey* (30 October 1996).



importantly, end “sweetheart deals” between private businesses and members of the government and ruling family.<sup>242</sup>

By brushing off the 1956 King Faisal law, which prohibited ministers and princes from participation in commercial business, and applying it to the privatization effort, the regime might be able to avoid the stagnation which has plagued Egyptian efforts to privatize. Furthermore, the national Chambers of Commerce could play a mediating role in rewriting commercial codes and finding acceptable ways to cut subsidies and free prices. Using the chambers in this manner would likely strengthen the informal networks between the rulers and the ruled, help increase political participation in a non-threatening manner, and help liberalize the economy.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Gause, “The Gulf Conundrum...,” 150.

<sup>243</sup> For a differing opinion on the utility of the private sector in developing civil society, see Andrew C. Hess, “Peace and political reform in the Gulf: The private sector,” *Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 1 (summer 1995): 103-122. Hess argues that “...rather than take advantage of the auspicious window of opportunity provided by the political changes after the Gulf War to become an agent of political change, the private sector in the Middle East will not attempt to transform its consultative relationship with the state into one of competition characteristic of a working democracy.”

## V. CONCLUSION

The bombing of the Saudi Arabian National Guard building in 1995 and the subsequent Khobar Towers bombing in 1996 renewed cries that the Saudi regime was in peril of being overthrown. Renewed emphasis has been placed on examining the kingdom's financial situation and equating gloomy economic prospects with an uncertain political future for the Al Saud. Many point to the inability of the state to press economic reforms from the mid-1980's through the mid-1990's, aimed at curbing subsidies, as a sign that the Saudi regime will be unable to maintain control of Saudi Arabia. "We who are so dependent on imports for our oil, should be attentive to the ragged tent of Saud, whose skirts are flapping dangerously in the first gusts of a harsh desert windstorm."<sup>244</sup>

These same critics fail to see the strength behind that economic reform failure and regime ability to shift its patronage to the Hijazi and eastern province merchants. Where some see weakness, this thesis sees strength. The patron-client relationship between the regime and its supporters works in a cooperative manner. Therefore, the regime's decision not to push the subsidy cuts should not be viewed as weakness, but instead as mutually beneficial manipulation of the client-patron relationship which, in the end, strengthens regime political stability.

The Saudi government has been running budget deficits since 1983. Economic difficulties are not new and the Al Saud have weathered turbulent economic seas rather

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<sup>244</sup> Jim Rogers, "The Crumbling House of Saud," *The Baltimore Sun* (30 June 1996), 1E.

well. It must be remembered that Saudi Arabia has not always enjoyed wealth and that the Saudi royal family's dominant position preceded the oil boom of the 1970's.<sup>245</sup> The loyalties of the Saudi citizenry have been partially gained by the regime through the distribution of benefits, but it is the ties of tribe, class and religion which provide the framework for this distribution. Indeed, it is not money but these ties which act as the great social lubricator. Ultimately, these ties prove stronger than welfare benefits.

The three situations which Denoeux views as especially conducive to use of informal networks for destabilization do not exist in Saudi Arabia. First, there has been no weakening of central authority in Saudi Arabia. Second, the government has not threatened the interests of substantial segments of the population. Although different elements of society have voiced dissatisfaction at times, there has been no widespread dissatisfaction which cuts across tribal, class or religious boundaries. Finally, the Saudi regime has been very adept at ensuring that religious, merchant and technocrat elites have maintained their bases of influence and stakes in the regime, and this has prevented any serious efforts to utilize informal networks against the regime.

The religious conservatives have been consulted in policy matters and given reign in the sphere of social mores. The mutawwa'in in particular have been used to appease conservative concerns and to check disruptive modernist influences. At the same time, the modernists have been given voice in the Majlis al-Shura and the regime has worked to counter neofundamentalist efforts to stifle continuing modernization. The regime

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<sup>245</sup> Dunn, 31-34.

appears serious about balancing the power of the different interest groups and is slowly working to institutionalize the relationships which have been built over time.

Recognizing that the Saudi regime is strong and stable has implications reaching beyond the kingdom. According to a September 1996 statement before the House Committee on International Relations by Robert H. Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, the national interests of the United States in the Middle East include nurturing close relations with our Gulf allies, ensuring the United States' access to the area's vital petroleum reserves, promoting democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and enhancing business opportunities for American companies.<sup>246</sup> At times these goals have not seemed compatible.

Maintaining close relations with our Gulf allies precluded the use of pressure on issues such as human rights, since such pressure would possibly hurt the legitimacy of friendly regimes. As a result, the promotion of democracy and human rights has been selectively pursued, leading to hypocrisy which has a "corrosive effect on America's standing in the region."<sup>247</sup> Although democracy may not be universally applicable, and championing democracy in the Saudi case would definitely antagonize an Islamic ally, the stability of the regime suggests that there is room for the United States to publicly

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<sup>246</sup> Robert H. Pelletreau, "Developments in the Middle East," statement before the House Committee on International Relations (25 September 1996).

<sup>247</sup> Richard W. Murphy and F. Gregory Gause, III, "Democracy and U.S. Policy in the Muslim Middle East," *Middle East Policy* 1, vol. 5 (January 1997): 59.

encourage respect for human rights and the rule of law.<sup>248</sup> The strengthening of civil society will help Saudi Arabia develop politically and commercially and there are signs that this process of civil strengthening continues.

In a January 1997 interview, King Fahd hinted that the Majlis al-Shura would be given greater powers, including wider prerogative to debate government policy and hold ministers accountable.<sup>249</sup> Then in July 1997 King Fahd expanded participation in the Majlis al-Shura. Unlike the situation in Iran, where informal networks were used against a regime which had lost touch with its citizenry, the Saudi situation appears to be one where the regime has kept touch with the citizenry and is working to engage its citizens in the process of governing.

In the case of the Shia, the regime has successfully implemented practices and policies which have not only prevented the formation of destabilizing informal networks but which have strengthened regime ties to the Shia. The ability of the Al Saud to coopt informal networks — patron-client, religious, occupational and residential — has been responsible for the inability of Saudi Islamist organizations to successfully challenge

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<sup>248</sup> The president of the Majlis al-Shura has stated western-style democratic elections are un-Islamic, that a precept of the Prophet states office should not go to those who seek it. For a critique of democracy and its applicability to other cultures see Michael A. Brookes, "Perils of a Democratic Peace," (M.A. thesis., Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 1997). Brookes finds grounds to question the wisdom of "democratic peace" as the basis for the U.S. national security strategy of engagement and enlargement.

<sup>249</sup> "Review of Saudi Arabia's Statutes May Affect Consultative Council and Crown Prince," *Mideast Mirror*, vol. 11, no. 2 (3 January 1997).



central authority. So long as Saudi Arabia's culture continues to function along the lines of tribe, class and religion, it is likely that the Saudi royal family will remain in power.



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